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CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR

NAU

U of M

E. H. S. Bishop

Captain Lettarblair

A Comedy in Three
Written for L. H. Sot

By

MARGUERITE MERK

Illustrated with photographs of

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Captain Lettarblair

A Comedy in Three Acts
Written for E. H. SOTHERN

By
MARGUERITE MERINGTON

Arranged from the prompt-book used in
the original Lyceum production

Illustrated with photographs of the play

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PUBLISHERS

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OCTOBER

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TO

MR. & MRS. E. H. SOTHERN

215778

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR LITTON . Of the Irish Fusiliers

DEAN AMBROSE . An Eminent Divine of the Old School

PINCKNEY . The Dean's Private Secretary, afterward a Subaltern in the Irish Fusiliers

FRANCIS MERIVALE . A Country Squire, Suitor to Fanny

MR. SETON . . . . . Fanny's Guardian

LORD WILLOUGHBY . . . Of the Irish Fusiliers

SMITHERS . A Clerk in the Office of Seton and Catesby

JORKINS . . . . . Servant to Lettarblair

HENRY . . . . . A Servant at the Deanery

FRANCES HADDEN . . The Dean's Orphan Niece

HYACINTH MESSITER . . . The Dean's Love

POLLY MESSITER . . . . Hyacinth's Niece

ACT I

Morning Room at Beechwood "Loves Me?"

ACT II

(ONE WEEK LATER)

Litton's Quarters in Barracks at Southampton
"Loves Me Not"

ACT III

(SIX MONTHS LATER)

SCENE 1—Office of Seton & Catesby, Solicitors, London

SCENE 2—By the Sun-Dial, in the Garden at Beechwood, the Following Day
"Loves Me!"

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LYCEUM THEATRE.

NEW YORK THEATRE CO., ... PROPRIETORS
DANIEL FROHMAN, ... MANAGER

Thursday, October 22, 1891, at 2 P M.

SPECIAL AUTHOR'S MATINEE.

First presentation on any stage of a new Comedy, in Three Acts and Four Scenes, entitled

LETTARBLAIR

Or, LOVES ME, LOVES ME NOT.

By MARGUERITE MERINGTON

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR LITTON ("Royal Irish Fusiliers")...E. H. SOTHERN
DEAN AMBROSE, his uncle... .. ..HARRY EYTINGE
PERCIVAL PINKNEY, Dean's Secretary.....WRIGHT HUNTINGTON
FRANCIS MERIVALE, a neighboring Squire, suitor to Fanny..MORTON SELTEN
MR. SETON, a lawyer, Fanny's trustee.... .....AUGUSTUS COOK
JORKINS, Litton's servant ("R. I. Fusiliers") .. ..ROWLAND BUCKSTONE
SMITHERS, Mr. Seton's clerk ... .PERCY SAGE
HENRY, Dean's servant..... FRANK LEIDEN
FANNY HADDEN, Mr. Seton's ward..... ....VIOLA ALLEN
(Through courtesy of Mr. Joseph Jefferson.)
POLLY MESSITER, the Dean's God daughter..... JENNY DUNBAR
HYACINTH MESSITER, her aunt.....KATE PATTISON-SELTEN

Time—The Present.

ACT I.—The Dean's house, Beechwood. "Loves me?"

ACT II.—Capt. Litton's quarters in the barracks at Southampton. "Loves me not."

ACT III.—Scene 1—Mr. Seton's office, London. Scene 2—The sun-dial, Beechwood. "Loves me."

"Alas, how easily things go wrong!
A word unsung in a lover's song,
And there cometh a mist and a blinding rain,
And life is never the same again."

"Alas, how hardly things go right!
A storm may come in a summer's night,
The stars will fade in the gloom away,
And a summer's night is a winter's day."

Scenery painted for this production by Reg. Morgan.
Music by Henry Puerner.

Every Evening and Wednesday and Saturday Matinee, E. H. Sothern and Company in "The Dancing Girl."

*** The Stock Company of the LYCEUM THEATRE will reappear for the regular Winter Season November 16, when the first of a series of new plays will be presented.

Programme continued on next page.

LYCEUM THEATRE.

NEW YORK THEATRE CO.,
DANIEL FROHMAN.

PROPRIETORS
MANAGER

Commencing Tuesday, Aug. 16. 1892 Evenings 8 15 Matinee Saturday at 2

SIXTH ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT (under the Management of DANIEL FROHMAN) of

E. H. SOTHERN,

In a new Comedy, in Three Acts and Four Scenes, entitled

CAPT. LETTARBLAIR

By MARGUERITE MERINGTON.

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR LITTON ("Royal Irish Fusiliers")....E. H. SOTHERN
DEAN AMBROSE, his uncle ..... C P. FLOCKTON
PERCIVAL PINKNEY, Dean's Secretary..... LAWRENCE CLARK
FRANCIS MERIVALE, a neighboring Squire, suitor to Fanny..MORTON SELTEN
MR. SETON, a lawyer, Fanny's trustee..... CHAS A. SMILEY
JORKINS, Litton's servant ("R. I. Fusiliers")..... ROWLAND BUCKSTONE
SMITHERS, Mr. Seton's clerk..... TULLY MARSHALL
HENRY, Dean's servant..... FRANK LEIDEN
FANNY HADDEN, Mr. Seton's ward ..... VIRGINIA HARNED
POLLY MESSITER, the Dean's God daughter..... JENNY DUNBAR
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Time—The Present

ACT I.—The Dean's house, Beechwood. "Loves me?"
ACT II.—Capt. Litton's quarters in the barracks at Southampton. "Loves me not."
ACT III.—Scene 1—Mr. Seton's office, London.
(Intermission—thirty seconds.)
Scene 2—The sun-dial, Beechwood "Loves me."

"Alas how easily things go wrong!
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Programme continued on second page following.

CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR

CAPTAIN LETTARBLAIR

ACT I

The interior of a well-furnished library in the Deanery at Beechwood, near Southampton, England. It is evening of an early spring day, and a grate fire throws a welcome glow over the room, with its handsome dark red carpet partly covered by three dark rugs, its large library table, a leather-covered lounge, an upright piano, and several chairs of the same heavy dark wood as the table. Two smaller tables stand one at either end of the room; books and ornaments are lying about on the tables; several palms stand in convenient niches, and the piano is littered with music sheets. The room presents an aspect of comfort and orderly disorder.

The Dean, a man of deliberate manner and fatherly benignity combined with a childlike ingenuousness, is seated on a sofa a little at the left, with his friend Mr. Seton, a lawyer of the old-school type. Pinckney, a volatile and impetuous youth, is seated at the table, writing; Polly, sprightly yet practical, leans over his shoulder. The Dean is poring over a railway guide.

DEAN

Handing time-table to Seton.

This is the best train to take, if you must leave us, Mr. Seton.

MR. SETON

Thanks for your hospitality, Dean; but I must go.

Reads.

Um—um—five—six—Limited Express. This A-B-C is very confusing.

Gives back time-table.

PINCKNEY

Rising.

'Tis easy as A-B-C.

POLLY

To a man of letters!

Pinckney takes the time-table from the Dean.

MR. SETON

Well, I must be on the move. Has the evening mail come in yet? I expect some important letters.

POLLY

Goes to the window, followed by Pinckney.

We'll watch for the post-bag.

DEAN

Pinckney! Go on with your writing, sir!

Pinckney returns to the table.

PINCKNEY

Yes, Dean!—I'm sorry I promised to copy this rubbishy sermon.

Aside, impassioned.

Oh, Fanny, I did it to be near thee!

MR. SETON

And I must say good-bye to Fanny—and to Litton, too. What has become of them?

POLLY

Fanny is riding with Captain Litton, as usual!

Laughs.

PINCKNEY

As usual Captain Litton is riding with Fanny!

With jealousy.

MR. SETON

Suddenly interested.

Aha!

DEAN

That reminds me, Mr. Seton, I have something to say to you in the strictest confidence.

PINCKNEY

Reading copy.

"—of the problem novel which, like the noxious weeds that choke the garden with their pestilen-

tial growth—" Oh, humbug! Polly, two s's in pestilential?

Polly holds up one finger.

Dean, have you ever read this problem novel?

DEAN

Certainly not! How dare you insinuate that I encourage such literature?

Pinckney resumes writing.

MR. SETON

To Dean.

You were about to say—?

DEAN

Speaking of my niece Fanny, the responsibility of her marriage rests with you, as her guardian and trustee—

MR. SETON

—and with you as her nearest living relative. But is there any present question of Fanny's marriage?

DEAN

Apparently. She has many suitors, some of whom will not take no for an answer.

MR. SETON

Some of them will have to. But, pray, who are these wooers?

DEAN

To begin near home, there's Pinckney. He's a good boy, though he hasn't any brains to speak of.

PINCKNEY

Has been listening. Rises.

What's that, Dean? 'Tis quality, not quantity, that counts.

DEAN

Reproving.

Pinckney!

Polly puts Pinckney back in seat and goes behind chair.

MR. SETON

Surely you would not think Pinckney a suitable match?

POLLY

Who has listened.

Indeed I should, but not for Fanny!

Polly goes to the conservatory.

DEAN

And there is young Merivale.

MR. SETON

What account can you give of Merivale?

DEAN

Only what he gives of himself,—and that is excellent.

MR. SETON

Shakes his head.

H'm! Wise men keep their accounts to themselves.

DEAN

And there is the latest comer on the field, our young Irish kinsman, Lettarblair.

MR. SETON

Does Fanny show any preference, think you?

DEAN

Yes! I am afraid the wind blows off the coast of Ireland.

MR. SETON

Pleased.

Capital!

DEAN

You surprise me, Seton! We know nothing of the young man.

MR. SETON

Your pardon, Dean; I know everything. And in confidence, I have a strong reason for hoping he will marry Fanny.

DEAN

Surprised.

Really! You have never hinted at any such reason.

MR. SETON

Because reason is fatal to women and love affairs. If the young people come together it must be from choice. But a great wrong will be righted if we join their hands.

DEAN

I am glad to know this, because Merivale has pressed his suit most vigorously since Litton's

advent—and I have encouraged him. He is a neighbour—

PINCKNEY

Writing.

"Let us love our neighbours." Oh, humbug!

Throws down pen in disgust.

POLLY

At window, speaking to Dean.

Godfather, here is Aunt Hyacinth crossing the garden. She said she would come for a game of whist with you. Mr. Seton, do you believe in marriage?

MR. SETON

Always, Polly, except when I have to help in the undoing of it.

POLLY

And, Godfather, don't you believe in it?

DEAN

Oratorically.

Assuredly, my flock—I mean, Polly—else how could I solemnise the rite?

POLLY

Her arm around Dean's neck.

Then why don't you do it yourself?

The Dean is embarrassed. Polly laughs.

HYACINTH

Entering.

Good evening, friends!

Dean and Seton both advance to meet her. Mr. Seton laughs, Dean embarrassed.

MR. SETON

Your servant, Miss Messiter. You find us two old bachelors discussing marriage.

HYACINTH

Sentimentally.

Ah, marriages are made in Heaven!

PINCKNEY

At table.

Sometimes they get no further!

DEAN

Embarrassed.

Pinckney, attend to your writing, sir!

POLLY

At window.

There's the post-bag! Let's get the letters!

Rushes off.

PINCKNEY

Anything for a change!

Runs off after Polly, who leaves by the window.

DEAN

Miss Hyacinth, will you be my partner—may I offer you a hand?

Miss Hyacinth appears embarrassed.

MR. SETON

Quizzically.

The Dean offers you his hand!

DEAN

Hastily explaining.

At whist.

Takes Hyacinth's hand, pauses, turns. Hyacinth proceeds to card-table.

I forgot to say, Mr. Seton, that Merivale will be here presently for his answer.

Hyacinth and Dean bring card-table to foot of sofa. Dean gets chair, places it at card-table. Hyacinth gets one from above door.

MR. SETON

Consults his watch.

I'll give him his answer.

Enter Pinckney and Polly, carrying letter-bag.

PINCKNEY

Here we are. Letters for everybody of every kind and quality. Red letters, dead-letters, capital letters, love-letters, bills and billets-doux.

Slaps letter-bag on the table, scattering papers front of table.

POLLY

Oh, Godfather, see all your notes go flying!

Hyacinth dealing cards.

DEAN

Pinckney! Such carelessness is inexcusable; all my "thoughts" are scattered to the winds!

Dean takes letter from Pinckney.

MR. SETON

We'll collect your scattered thoughts.

Polly kneels front of table, picking up papers.

DEAN

Look at "fourteenthly" lying on the floor!

PINCKNEY

Here's "sixteenthly"! Sweet sixteenthly!

DEAN

Pinckney!

PINCKNEY

And here are your "Last Words," Dean.

DEAN

Gives letters to Seton.

Pinckney! Mr. Seton, sir, your mail.

Enter Merivale.

DEAN

Good evening, Mr. Merivale.

MERIVALE

Good evening, Dean.

Nods to others. Merivale places cane on piano. Dean takes zither from head of sofa and places it on table. They talk apart a minute while Mr. Seton reads letter.

MR. SETON

Reading letter to himself.

"Come immediately, matter cleared up about John Robinson's will and Crawford estate." Good! Now if only the young people will have the sense to fall in love with each other—! Good!

Dean motions Seton, who comes up. Dean presents Merivale to Mr. Seton. They shake hands stiffly.

PINCKNEY

Holds up letter in yellow envelope.

Here's a letter for Captain Lettarblair Litton, care of Dean Ambrose, Beechwood. I'd like to know what's inside it!

MERIVALE

Turns from Mr. Seton and speaks over his shoulder to Pinckney.

A bill, no doubt.

PINCKNEY

It looks bilious. Ha, ha, ha!

Throws Litton's letter on table. Takes out his own letter—blue envelope.

DEAN

Behind sofa.

Pinckney! How dare you comment on a guest's private correspondence! Come and join us at the card-table, sir.

Hyacinth seats herself on foot of sofa.

PINCKNEY

Waving official blue envelope.

Hurrah! From the Horse Guards—War Office! Hurrah! I've received my commission.

Polly joins him, leaning on his shoulder.

DEAN

If your faults of commission are equal to your faults of omission, I'm sorry for the British army, sir.

Dean and Hyacinth bring card-table forward a little. Dean, Hyacinth, Pinckney and Polly sit down to cards. Merivale appears to take idle interest in the game, while Seton meditates.

HYACINTH

Won't Mr. Seton take a hand?

SETON

With a smile and a sigh.

Ah, Madam, solitaire is the only game I play! Solitaire!

PINCKNEY

At cards.

One, two, three, four, and kiss the Dean—I mean the dealer, Miss Hyacinth!

HYACINTH

In a flutter.

Oh, I really must be excused!

DEAN

Angrily.

Pinckney, sir! How dare you—er—secularise whist!

MERIVALE

Sitting on edge of table, addresses Seton.

My attachment for your ward is deep and sincere!

POLLY

To Pinckney, at cards.

Some people don't know a heart from a club!

MERIVALE

Even if I myself may not win Fanny, I grieve to see her thrown away!

SETON

Thrown away! How so? Upon whom?

MERIVALE

The Irishman, of course!

SETON

Among a certain class of Englishmen it is a habit to look with suspicion upon all Irishmen, but—

MERIVALE

Interrupting.

Oh, I own to a distinct insular prejudice against—

SETON

Interrupting.

Insular, Mr. Merivale! Must I remind you that Erin also is an island, and not—

MERIVALE

—a distinct British—prejudice, I should say, against adventurers!

Goes to mantel and leans elbow on it.

I happen to know something of Litton's private affairs. They are written in three letters: I O U!

SETON

You mistake, sir! True, the captain is burdened by a heavy debt—

MERIVALE

Debts—which he hopes to discharge by marriage with an heiress!

SETON

Which debt he is honourably discharging! Nor was the obligation of his incurring. His father—

MERIVALE

I remember! Old Litton's criminal folly nearly wrecked the Crawford Bank. No wonder Litton starves himself to hush up the story.

HYACINTH

At cards.

Trump at all, trump high!

SETON

Litton might publish the story and be proud of it. His father died under the shadow of the general belief in his guilt. His partner, his friend, the only man who could have cleared his name, was silent.

MERIVALE

John Robinson, you mean. Since he is dead he will remain silent.

POLLY

At cards.

There's a knave for you!

SETON

Ah, the dead sometimes speak; and we old lawyers are their confidants. My visit to the continent is to receive such a message.

Rises, looks at watch.

Come, Mr. Merivale, time presses, but in view of your disinterested attachment to my ward—

HYACINTH

At cards.

'Tis his only good card!

MR. SETON

—let me assure you that Captain Litton is no adventurer, but a highly honourable gentleman.

Putting on glove.

Although he could contest it, for his father's sake he is paying off the debt to the Crawford estate from the revenues of his Irish property. His means are only temporarily straitened; so pray dismiss the thought that Miss Hadden will throw herself away if she chooses to marry him.

POLLY

At cards, claps hands.

Aha! You're beaten!

MERIVALE

Aside.

Beaten? Not yet!

Enter Henry.

HENRY

The carriage is ready, sir!

The card-players rise. Pinckney puts card-table aside and goes to window. Hyacinth

joins Polly. Dean goes to screen, taking overcoat with cape, shovel hat and scarf. Hyacinth assists him to put these on.

SETON

Consulting watch.

By Jove, I must be off!

Holds out hand to Merivale.

Thank you, Mr. Merivale, for taking a no in such good part!

MERIVALE

Shaking hands with Seton.

Don't mention it!—

Aside.

since a no from the guardian is not a no from the ward!

Seton discovers he has forgotten glove; returns to table for it.

PINCKNEY

Now, Mr. Seton, sir! Time-tables wait for no man!

FANNY

Speaking outside.

Take Gypsy's saddle off, John! Mr. Seton—

Entering by the window, left.

Where's Mr. Seton! Oh, guardian—

PINCKNEY

Rapturously.

Fanny! Would I were thy guardian!

Goes out, gazing at Fanny.

FANNY

Oh, I was afraid I shouldn't catch you!

Running to Seton.

SETON

My dear Fanny, I'm afraid I shall not catch my train!

FANNY

Clinging to Seton.

Just one word, guardian!

Whispers.

Don't frown when I tell you—I have written to the office for some money! I have a pressing need of money!

SETON

Indulgently.

Extravagant little girl! For bonnets, I suppose!

FANNY

Bonnets, indeed! For something whose fashion never will grow old!

SETON

God bless my soul! Bonbons, no doubt!

FANNY

Oh, no! Something infinitely more sweet!

SETON

Well, well, I haven't been near the office for a month—gout and external legal complications, but—

Disengaging himself.

my partner, Mr. Catesby, will have attended to it!

PINCKNEY

Appears at the door, bringing Seton's hat and coat.

Come, Mr. Seton! Trains don't allow for the law's delay!

FANNY

Detaining Seton.

Then you don't mind? Then I may have all the money I want?

SETON

Certainly! I don't suppose you want much!

FANNY

Aside, laughs.

Not much? Only a small fortune!

She meets Merivale in front of table and greets him.

DEAN

Shaking hands with Mr. Seton.

Good-bye, Mr. Seton. I trust your sojourn on the continent will restore your health.

SETON

Thank you, Dean. I trust it may also clear the reputation of an honest man.

Fanny runs to overtake him, calling, "Guardian—one word."
Exeunt all; Fanny teasing; Seton expostulating, others saying "Good-bye." All but Merivale follow Seton to the door. Chorus of "Good-bye, bon voyage," etc.

MERIVALE

Alone.

Is there no getting rid of the fellow? Confound him! She'd have cared for me in time if he hadn't come by with his brogue and his uniform. Even his debts are encircled with a halo of romance. Debts! I've as many debts as Lit-

ton if people did but know it. But I incurred my debts on my own account, like a man, instead of saddling myself with other people's, like a donkey.

Goes into conservatory as Polly enters, waving her hand and calling good-bye to Mr. Seton.
Fanny follows Polly. Merivale stands within conservatory, unseen by them.

FANNY

Noticing letter-bag.

Anything for me to-day, Polly?

POLLY

Yes, indeed.

Picks up Litton's letter and reads.

"Captain Lettarblair Litton."

FANNY

What do you mean, Polly?

POLLY

Dropping letter on table and leaning over Fanny.

Isn't *he* for you—to-day and always?

FANNY

Oh, Polly! What makes you think I care for him?

POLLY

Coming to Fanny's side.

Why, your cheeks mount colours as red as his uniform at the very mention of his name. See there, now!

Kneels by Fanny.

FANNY

Oh, Polly, I do!—

Kisses Polly.

POLLY

Chaffingly.

Then, dear, what is the obstacle?

FANNY

Why do people say such things of him? Why did my grandfather leave me such a lot of money?

A little pause.

Francis Merivale tells me that Lettarblair plays.

POLLY

That's nice—since you sing!

FANNY

Plays cards, I mean. Is extravagant, and has a heap of horrid debts. There was a queer-look-

ing man asking for Lettarblair this morning. Francis Merivale said it was a bailiff.

POLLY

Francis Merivale ought to know the look of one. Well, you're so rich, why don't you pay Lettarblair's debts for him?

FANNY

Polly—I'll tell you a secret. Promise you'll never tell.

POLLY

Never! S'help me!

Crosses her heart. Merivale, in conservatory, holds curtain aside and listens unseen.

FANNY

I'm going to give Lettarblair some of my money.

POLLY

With yourself?

FANNY

No, first!

POLLY

Oh, but he would never take it from you.

FANNY

He won't know it comes from me. I told my bankers at Southampton to send Lettarblair an order on his bank—the Bank of Burmah in London—saying it was part payment of an old debt to his estate, and that the remainder would shortly follow.

POLLY

Oh! would Mr. Seton let you spend your money that way?

FANNY

I'm afraid he wouldn't, if he knew. But Mr. Seton has been away from his office, ill, so I wrote to his partner for the money. There is an old debt to my grandfather's property, the Crawford estate. The people are paying it off year by year. Well—I wrote to Mr. Catesby to make them pay it all at once. He got half the money from them, ten thousand pounds. I told him to press them—squeeze them for the rest. I must have it. I want it all—for Lettarblair!

POLLY

Counting her fingers.

Ten thousand pounds plus ten more thousand pounds! Do you love Lettarblair twenty—thousand—pounds' worth?

Opening eyes in amazement.

FANNY

Oh, Polly! The sum of it can not be told!

POLLY

It is be-eautiful! Just like "Once upon a time!"

FANNY

Looking at Litton's letter.

"Bank of Burmah." Polly—

Rising, delighted.

I do believe—it is—it is! This is the letter that gives fortune to him, and him to me!

Kisses letter.

He must find it here when he comes in!

At back of table; replaces letter in bag.

He will find he is suddenly rich—then if he comes to me—I shall know it is from love and not necessity!

LITTON

Outside, sings with Irish accent.

"Gin a body kiss a body, need a body cry!"

POLLY

"Gin a body—" Oh, Fanny, did Lettarblair do that?

FANNY

Indignantly.

As if I would let him!

POLLY

As if he would wait for permission!

FANNY

As if he would dare!

POLLY

As if he wouldn't! As if you wouldn't like him the better for his daring!

FANNY

Polly, you horrid girl!

Polly and Fanny run into the conservatory.

MERIVALE

Advancing, keeping the piano between himself and them. Aside.

Aha! Then Fanny is Lettarblair's mysterious creditor, and she is squeezing him for money to pay his own indebtedness!

Laughs.

That's why old Seton favours his suit! Book-keeping made easy! Balancing debit and credit side of the account by marrying them!

Takes Litton's letter from table.

Ten thousand pounds! It's an age since I've handled such a sum!

Weighs letter in hand, then holds it up to light.

There's something about money—the mere contact with it engenders a feeling of prosperity! Why the mischief did I pose as a man of means! But who'd have thought a girl would take it into her head to fall in love with poverty! And the deuce of it is—even now if I persuade her to marry me and Litton gets this money—

Starts guiltily on hearing Fanny's voice, drops letter.

FANNY

Ah, Polly, they don't know him as I do! While we were riding he spoke to me—

LITTON

Outside, sings.

"Gin a body meet a body, comin' thro' the rye,
Gin a body kiss a body, need a body cry!
Every lassie hae her laddie—"

During this Merivale debates with himself in pantomime whether he shall steal Litton's letter, finally succumbing to the temptation and pocketing it as he goes out.

LITTON

Outside.

"Yet all the lads they smile at me,
When comin' thro' the rye!"

FANNY

Slowly approaching.

I will not bind myself to him till I have proved him to them all!

PINCKNEY

Who has peeped in at Fanny, now runs down to her and kneels before her.

Fanny—I—I love you! I've been copying

those beastly sermons all day to get a chance to tell you!

FANNY

Moves away.

Oh, Mr. Pinckney, are you proposing to me again!

PINCKNEY

Following her on his knees.

I was trying to—but—it seems a movable feast!

FANNY

Walks on.

Ah, don't! You know I have but one answer to give you!

POLLY

Who has been peeping in from conservatory, amused.

Persevere, Percival! If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again!

PINCKNEY

On his knees.

Fanny—I love you!

Act I

"Well, don't mind me!" *Page 33*

Main

FANNY

Having been talking to herself about Lettarblair, returns, almost falling over Pinckney.

Oh, Mr. Pinckney, are you still proposing to me?

Moves away, Pinckney still following on his knees. Enter Litton.

LITTON

Ah! At your devotions, Pinckney, darlin'? Well, don't mind me!

Puts hat, etc., on card-table.

PINCKNEY

Rising angrily.

I *don't* mind you, sir!

Fanny goes up, laughing, and joins Polly.

LITTON

Then don't be making angry faces, Pinckney, dear!

PINCKNEY

Captain, I should like to propose to you—

Advancing angrily on Litton.

LITTON

Ah, Pinckney, darlin', it's breath wasted and thrown away to propose to me!

Polly runs to Pinckney, restraining him.

PINCKNEY

Sir, you are not the only soldier in the world!

Waving his commission.

LITTON

Faith, if I were, 'tis the Colonel I'd be, not the Captain!

POLLY

Drags Pinckney to the door.

Never mind, Percy! You proposed very nicely—only it was to the wrong girl!

Pinckney goes out majestically, followed by Polly, mocking him.

LITTON

"Gin a body kiss a body need a body—"

Goes to Fanny, who is standing by the sofa, and tries to put his arm about her waist.

FANNY

Don't! You are taking a liberty!

Freeing herself.

LITTON

Fanny, I'm your captive—and liberty's the

sweetest thing a captive can take! Fanny, what would you have?

FANNY

Sighs.

I don't know!

LITTON

Again tries to put an arm about her.

Try me!

FANNY

Don't!

LITTON

Sure a soldier must win his way by force of arms, Fanny!

FANNY

Goes to table.

What do you take me for?

LITTON

For better or worse, if I can get ye!

Throws glove on table.

FANNY

Gaining time.

Why do you talk to me this way?

Soft music is heard: "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms." The twilight wanes.

LITTON

Taking both Fanny's hands.

Fanny, how else should I talk to you—though it's content I'd be to sit and look at ye! Fanny, I love you! I love you without rhyme, because I'm not a poet; and I love you without reason, since it passes calculation! Fanny, I love you every way and always—and it's your heart I'm trying to read; but I can't get beyond the spell of your eyes!

FANNY

Leans against table, laughing and playing with her riding-crop. Turns her face from him.

You say these things so aptly—as if you had said them before!

LITTON

Impressively.

Fanny, I have!

FANNY

Petulantly turning on him.

Then how dare you say them to me!

LITTON

Fanny, it is to you, and to you alone, I have

"I can't get beyond the spell of your eyes!" *Page 36*

NIH

said them!—Come, don't trifle with me!—If it's yes, 'tis yes; and I'm the happiest man in the world and the luckiest!

He lays a hand on hers. She puts it from her and moves away.

And if it's no, 'tis no—and off I go to India!

FANNY

Turns to him, pleading.

Ah, no! Not that!

LITTON

Taking her hand.

Then give me an answer, dear heart!

FANNY

With deep feeling.

How can I be sure that you love me as you say!

LITTON

With confidence.

Marry me, sure! 'Tis the only way to find out!

FANNY

She attempts to turn away from him. He prevents her, holding her left hand and fondling it.

Wait till to-morrow!

LITTON

Ah, Fanny, yesterday you said, "To-day," and to-day you say "To-morrow!" And the nearest to-morrow is a year away when a man cares for a woman as I care for you! Do you want me to beat about the bush for twenty years, like Uncle Ambrose, till the roses have withered and youth gone by?—Give me at least some hope!

FANNY

Deeply touched, yet withdrawing her hand.

Have faith instead!

LITTON

With spirit.

Faith! The evidence of things not seen? Faith, not I! If I have to feed my starved heart on a cardinal virtue I'll take charity—for that means love!

FANNY

Aside.

Oh, where's my courage!

Turns and speaks to Litton.

Wait!

She leans on mantel, tapping lightly with crop, hardly trusting herself to speak.

LITTON

Wait, wait!—How can I go about with a weight on my heart!—Fanny—

FANNY

Goes to table, picks up letter-bag and feels in it.

Did you know? There is a letter for you.

LITTON

Feels for her hand inside letter-bag.

Fanny, 'tis a lady I'm addressing, not a letter! —Fanny, how much longer am I to wait? And what is it we're waiting for?

FANNY

Smiles mysteriously.

Some time to-day!

LITTON

Impatiently.

It's some time to-day this very minute! It has been some time to-day ever since last night. Fanny, my regiment is under marching orders; in a week we're off to India. I want to know my fate now that I may have a whole week to realise my happiness; to feel that a jewel of a heart is

beating for me when I am far away; that sweet eyes are watching for my letters; and a sweetheart awaiting my return!

FANNY

But you might have a change of heart, you know!

LITTON

Sure a change of heart is just what I'm after! I've given you mine, and I want yours in return!

Fanny gets handful of letters from bag, looks them over—throws them on table—turns away—leans on arm-chair; says nothing, but seems to be distressed.

Fanny, dearest, something distresses ye! What is it? Surely you don't doubt my love for you? As the old song says:

"If she loves me, this believe,
I will die ere she should grieve."

Only I'd rather live with ye than die for ye! Fanny, is it a burden? Let me bear it for you. Is it a sorrow? Let me share it with you. Come, sweetheart!

He draws her to him and is about to kiss her, when she breaks away.

"'Tis a lady I'm addressing, not a letter!" *Page 39*

Mau

FANNY

Aside.

I will not yield!

LITTON

Ah, Fanny, Fanny, what is the shadow that has come between us?

Merivale is seen crossing in the rear.

FANNY

Indicates Merivale as she sees him approaching.

Francis Merivale!

LITTON

I'll tell him he's come to the wrong house.

FANNY

Aside, detaining him.

No—no—tell him I'm engaged for a minute.

LITTON

Turns, seizing her hand.

I'll tell him you're engaged for all time to me.

Kisses her hand.

FANNY

No! No!

Enter Merivale at arch, as if about to take his cane from piano.

MERIVALE

Ah, good evening, Litton.

Aside.

Confound the fellow! Here as usual.

LITTON

Good morrow to ye, Merivale.

Aside.

Divvle take him.

FANNY

With difficulty concealing emotion.

I'm just going to the stable to give Gypsy some sugar.

Exit, agitated.

MERIVALE

I hope you're not put out by my arrival.

LITTON

Your arrival? Whose rival are ye, Merivale?

Appears to be going.

MERIVALE

Going?

LITTON

Changing mind about going.

Yes—to stay!

Goes to sofa—sits.

MERIVALE

Sorry to have disturbed your tête-à-tête, but Miss Hadden sent for me on business, so, of course, I fly to her feet.

LITTON

Fly to her feet. Gone into the shoe business, have you, Merivale? You'll make a capital cobbler.

MERIVALE

As usual, you entertain yourself at my expense, Litton.

LITTON

'Tis all I get at your expense, Merivale.

MERIVALE

Rises and bows with elaborate irony.

I have not your advantages, Captain Litton.

LITTON

Imitating Merivale.

You're a beautiful creature, *Mr.* Merivale.

MERIVALE

Sits again.

I know I'm slow.

LITTON

Sits again.

Ah, don't abuse yourself behind your back.

MERIVALE

But a hare and a tortoise once ran a race, my *dear* Litton.

LITTON

It's the affectionate creature ye are, my *dear* Merivale!

MERIVALE

Getting excited.

At the end of the race, my dear Litton, your hare—

Slaps table.

Where was your hare?

LITTON

Slapping table.

On a head, Merivale, dear, where my hair grows. Did ye want a lock of it?

MERIVALE

Leaning on the table, hand under chin.

Litton, you don't like me!

LITTON

Imitating Merivale.

Merivale, you're a mind-reader!

MERIVALE

Folds arms on table.

Well, Litton, *do* you like me?

LITTON

Imitating Merivale.

Merivale—I do *not*.

MERIVALE

Why?

LITTON

Oh, I don't know! You're too big.

MERIVALE

Oh!

LITTON

You take up too much room.

MERIVALE

Ah!

LITTON

And—Merivale, I don't like your clothes.

MERIVALE

Perhaps you object to my visits here?

LITTON

Well, Merivale, dear, they're like your manners; there's a lack of finish about them.

MERIVALE

Anything more?

LITTON

I'll write to ye about it. But you're always in the way, Merivale!

MERIVALE

Ah, we *are* rivals!

" Merivale, you're a mind-reader ! " *Page 45*

LITTON

Ah, you're full of fun, ain't you?

MERIVALE

But I am first in the field.

LITTON

Merivale, that's the proper place for a farmer.

MERIVALE

You're no farmer, so it's not the place for you.

LITTON

Merivale, you wealthy darlin'; if I had your money I'd go abroad in a minute for the good of my country.

MERIVALE

Aside.

Ah, it is the money, is it?

Aloud.

Fanny will never marry a miserable beggar.

LITTON

Ah, now, don't despair, Merivale! I don't!

MERIVALE

Slaps breast.

At any rate no interested motives enter into *my* breast, my dear Litton!

LITTON

Sings derisively.

"Ah, there's not in this wide world a Merivale so sweet,
As the Merivale in whose bosom such sintiments meet!"

It grows gradually darker. Fanny and Polly enter through conservatory, bringing roses.

FANNY

To Polly.

Oh, he has not read his letter. We must give him a chance to read his letter!

Addressing Merivale.

Francis, we are going to fill the vases. Won't you come and help us?

MERIVALE

With triumphant look at Litton.

With pleasure!

As Fanny turns she drops a rose. Both lovers strive to get it. Merivale, succeeding, laughs

mockingly, swinging the blossom in front of Litton as he follows Fanny.

I'm afraid you're left out, Litton!

LITTON

Quietly, capturing the rose.

God bless you, Merivale!

Merivale makes an angry gesture, as if to strike him.

FANNY

We will leave you to your letters!

LITTON

Striving not to appear neglected.

At any rate I have your rose!

FANNY

And my rose has thorns!

LITTON

Then shall I know it is Fanny masquerading as a flower!

Fanny and Merivale go out. Litton crosses rather disconsolately to the large arm-chair by the fire. Polly, who has been an amused spectator in the background, goes toward door.

POLLY

Softly to Litton.

Never mind, dear Lettarblair! She loves you! —She loves you!

Goes out.

LITTON

Sits gloomily by fire.

Ah—she loves me not!

The Dean enters, humming a tune. He looks about, and, seeing no one, speaks to himself, meanwhile taking off hat, scarf and overcoat, placing these on back of arm-chair so that they fall over Litton.

DEAN

Most exciting!—If the young person in the College Library had not had to hunt up Fox's *Martyrs* for me—! Happening on the fiction shelf to notice a copy of the offending work—

Takes novel from pocket, looks at it dubiously.

I casually—er—quite casually—It looks innocuous! And yet—by rights it should be cast into the fire—and yet—I have a mind to—I trust I shall be undisturbed. Everybody, I trust, is occupied!

Looks about; goes up, gets screen and places this about head of sofa. Goes toward door and draws curtain over it.

Fanny, no doubt, is out with Lettarblair or Merivale; Merivale or Lettarblair!

Fetches palm from table and, stooping, sets this in front of sofa. As he rises, his head strikes the palm, and he exclaims, startled.

Pinckney!—Ah, how stupid of me! Pinckney is buried in sermons!—Not that I shun observation—

Strikes match, lights candle, and sets this on piano.

Still, if found, I might be misunderstood, thought too advanced; a convert to views of life of which I prefer to remain in ignorance, or which I peruse only to abhor!

Opening book, with a long breath of comfort, lies on sofa so as to be screened from view. The room is dark except for the firelight.

LITTON

Lifting hat and overcoat.

His mantle has fallen on my shoulders, and all his imperfections on my head! Alas, poor Yorick!

Smithers enters, looking about for some one. Litton sees him, and, agitated, gets behind the chair, putting on the Dean's hat, coat and scarf to disguise himself. Then, seizing a book from the mantel-piece, he sinks down into the chair as if absorbed in reading, coughing.

There's that infernal Smithers from Seton and Catesby's! The devil fly away with him!—I'll wager he's got a warrant for some ridiculous trifle—and I shan't have a penny till quarter-day! —Ahem! Ahem!

SMITHERS

Turns and sees Litton.

Eh? The hold gent!—Beg pardon, your Reverence, but I want to see Captain Litton!

Litton coughs and mumbles, affecting not to hear. Hyacinth enters, and, seeing Litton, mistakes him for the Dean.

HYACINTH

Rapturously.

His sainted and never-to-be-mistaken head!

SMITHERS

Stepping down front.

The hold gent's deaf! Ahem! Beg pardon, your Reverence, but is Captain Litton—

HYACINTH

Prodding Smithers in the back with her parasol.

Hush! How dare you disturb the meditations of this holy man!

Pointing to Litton.

SMITHERS

Beg pardon, Madam, but is Captain Litton—

HYACINTH

Prodding Smithers toward door.

In the garden!

SMITHERS

Going.

Beg pardon, Madam, but I honly came to collect a bill!

Exit. Hyacinth takes a chair and places it near Litton.

LITTON

Peeping over back of arm-chair; aside.

'Tis Hyacinth, the Dean's beloved!

He sinks back as Hyacinth turns, and again reads.

HYACINTH

Sitting and patting skirts into place, then folding hands demurely.

Forgive this worldly interruption to your pious meditations, Dean; but I have taken this liberty—I have come because I desire to see you on a matter of the greatest importance, Dean—and alone!

The Dean is heard to snore slightly.

LITTON

He's asleep! By the Rock of Cashel I'll propose to her for him, the blessed old dried lavender saint!

HYACINTH

I have that to say which is almost too delicate for words!

LITTON

Aside.

The darlin' old soul, she's like the perfume of faded rose-leaves!

HYACINTH

I have come to tell you the story of a young girl's love!

LITTON

Aside, interested.

If she isn't going to do the wooing herself!

HYACINTH

Where for myself I should die silent, another's suffering has made me bold—and that other, our darling, Dean; your niece, Dean; my godchild, our Fanny!

LITTON

Exclaiming, amazed, then coughing again in imitation of the Dean.

Fanny! Ahem! Ahem! Hem!

HYACINTH

With concern.

Dear, dear, that cough of yours!

LITTON

Aside.

'Tisn't mine!

HYACINTH

But about Fanny. As you know, Dean, I have watched her, loved her ever since on Sundays I taught her her little hymn.

LITTON

Aside.

Faith, I'm her little Him!

HYACINTH

And now our rose-bud has blossomed, and many have discovered that she is fair, Dean. Our Fanny has many suitors. One—Merivale—is rich, a neighbour. All have hoped—you yourself have hoped that she would learn to care for him!

LITTON

Aside.

She needn't. The divvle will!

HYACINTH

Sighing.

But man proposes—

LITTON

Aside.

Ah, sometimes he's a long time about it, darlin'!

HYACINTH

And Fanny loves Lettarblair Litton!

LITTON

Amazed, overjoyed, tosses up his book. It falls upon the Dean, who is heard to waken with an exclamation.

Glory, hallelujah!

HYACINTH

Surprised at the supposed Dean's excitement.

I assure you, Dean! I had it from Polly! If only Fanny could be persuaded that the Captain's love is disinterested—

LITTON

Faith, I'll do the persuading myself!

Rushes at Hyacinth and kisses her with a resounding smack. At the moment the Dean's face, wearing a horrified expression, appears above the screen.

PINCKNEY

Running in, pen in hand.

Oh, Dean! How do you spell—

Breaks off, with a surprised whistle, seeing Hyacinth in the supposed Dean's embrace.

DEAN

Pinckney! How dare you suppose—

Breaks off and ducks behind screen.

PINCKNEY

Not seeing Dean.

By—Jove!

Exit, whistling.

HYACINTH

Detaching herself.

Oh, Dean! Oh, dear, I really must be going! —Farewell, beloved!—He has declared himself at last!

Runs off, leaving her parasol.

LITTON

Coughs, imitating the Dean, till she has gone, then bursts into laughter.

She loves me, bless her wayward little heart! Fanny loves me! Then why the devil didn't she say so! Goodness knows I've asked her times enough! Oh, but she has doubts of my character—thinks I love money, maybe! Just as if I'd ever been intimately enough acquainted with it to squander my affections on it! But, bless her

Sits, smiling beatifically.

wayward little heart, all the same she loves me! Girls are queer creatures, though! I love Fanny;

Rises and moves about.

I go tell it to Fanny! Fanny loves me; and Fanny tells it to Polly; Polly mentions it to Hyacinth; Hyacinth communicates it to the Dean—

The Dean again appears above the screen.

And, next, I suppose, the Dean will confide it to—

Breaks off, catching sight of the Dean.

The devil!—My dear sir! How are ye! Take a hat, won't you? First-rate thing after a nap!

Tosses hat to Dean.

"And, next, the Dean will confide it to—The devil!" *Page 58*

DEAN

With great dignity, still standing on sofa, behind screen.

Thank you, Lettarblair! I was about to trouble you for it!

LITTON

No trouble at all! Take a coat!

Tosses the Dean his overcoat, then sits in high chair, laughing.

DEAN

Enraged.

Now, sir, perhaps you will explain your preposterous conduct!

He advances threateningly on Litton, who leaps up and protects himself with a chair.

You have taken a base advantage of my innocent and intellectual slumbers to—

LITTON

Seizing the hand with which the Dean is gesticulating.

Uncle Ambrose! I want to put a question to ye! Do you love your niece?

DEAN

I do! Assuredly I do!

LITTON

Now, that's a remarkable coincidence—for so do I—and I know, dear Uncle Ambrose, that you love me!

DEAN

Well, Lettarblair, I—

LITTON

So to save ye the trouble of distributing your affections you shall make us one!

Shakes the Dean's hand rapturously.

DEAN

You mean—?

LITTON

Interrupting.

I do! You grasp it perfectly! Then I have your permission to address her? Not that I've waited for it!

DEAN

Doubtfully.

Ahem! I must consider—I must communicate with Seton. I must—

HYACINTH

Entering, looks about.

My parasol—I left it—

DEAN

Not seeing Hyacinth.

To-night, at eight o'clock, in my library, Litton, you shall satisfy me as to your circumstances, and your general—er—desirability to become my—.

HYACINTH

My parasol!—Oh, there—!

Looking about, finds parasol. Seeing Dean, runs to him, and, throwing arms about him, kisses him fondly.

Beloved!

Runs coyly off. The Dean, dumfounded, sinks into chair, while Litton laughs at him.

DEAN

Recovering breath.

This is all your fault, Lettarblair! Words can not describe—Words are inadequate—inadequate!

LITTON

Imitating a kiss.

Aye! Actions speak louder than words!

DEAN

Enraged, rising.

It is scandalous, sir! Scandalous!

Waves the novel he holds, then suddenly becomes conscious of it and tries to conceal it.

LITTON

Seizing the novel.

Scandalous it is! Oho! No wonder you're ashamed! Get along with you, you rascal!

Pushes the Dean toward door.

DEAN

Dear, dear! Misfortunes never come single!

LITTON

'Tis because you're single they come! I congratulate you on your approaching marriage!

DEAN

Horrified.

What, sir! You don't mean to imply that the contract you so audaciously entered into in my name is—

LITTON

The lady sealed the contract!

Imitates a kiss.

Oh, but you're done for entirely!

DEAN

And I—who am so opposed to change! After an attachment of twenty years—

LITTON

Another year and it would be of age—and then where are ye!

DEAN

Pathetically, wringing hands.

I have been kissed!

LITTON

Pulling Dean toward door.

'Tis the devilish Romeo ye are!

DEAN

I have been kissed!

LITTON

Throwing scarf about the Dean's shoulders.

Don Juan was a duffer to ye!

DEAN

Hurrying, trying to conceal novel.

I have been kissed! Oh, Lettarblair! *O tempora! O mores!* I have been kissed—kissed—

LITTON

Cheer up, ye fallen angel!

DEAN

Kissed!

Exit.

LITTON

I'll speak to Fanny to-night! One minute I'm led to think she loves me—the next she loves me not!—But I will know to-night—

Henry enters, bringing lamp, which he sets on table. He restores the screen to its place, then exit.

—to-night, for I love her more than—

JORKINS

Enters with a letter, salutes.

Are you here, Captain?

LITTON

Use your eyes, you old duffer!

JORKINS

Aside.

Calls me "hold duffer!" Lord love 'im! Just like 'is father!

LITTON

What are you wanting?

JORKINS

This letter, Captain!—I was at the smith's with Kitty Tyrrell. She had a shoe loose, Captain. The smithy is by the station—and hearing a young man who'd come down from London say he didn't know where to find you to deliver this, I brought it myself!

LITTON

Well, hand it over, you old slow-coach!

Snatching letter.

JORKINS

Salutes. Admiringly, aside.

Calls me "hold slow-coach," God bless 'im! Just like 'is father!

LITTON

Absently.

Loves me—loves me not—

JORKINS

Quite so, sir! Beg pardon, sir, but the young

man said it was from the lawyer's, so I galloped all the way from the village—

LITTON

Wrathfully.

The devil you did, on my precious Kitty Tyrrell! Go walk her about till she cools off, then give her a bran mash with a glass of whisky in it, you old scoundrel!

JORKINS

Yes, sir!

Admiringly aside.

"Hold scoundrel!" Just like 'is father!—I'll give the mare the mash, and take the whisky myself!

LITTON

Has read letter. Overcome.

My God! What does this mean?

JORKINS

Salutes.

Hany answer, sir?

LITTON

Jorkins, I'm a beggar!

JORKINS

Naturally, sir!

Salutes.

Hany other hanswer, sir?

LITTON

Answer? No! It's fate, I suppose—and fate is unanswerable! At any rate she's a woman, and always has the last word!

JORKINS

Saluting.

Did you say I was to say that, Captain?

LITTON

I am trying to make you understand, you old fool, that you can tell the young man I will go up to town at once, and settle the whole of the beggarly business! Pack up, and make short work of it!

JORKINS

Saluting. Goes toward door.

Very well, sir.

LITTON

Calls after him.

Oh, and Jorkins, look well after Kitty Tyrrell!

JORKINS

Yes, sir. Called me hold fool,

Salutes and goes, laughing to himself indulgently.

God bless 'im! Just like 'is father!

LITTON

Alone, refers to letter.

"Our client, the Heir of Crawford, instructs us to press you for a full and immediate payment of your debt to the Crawford estate. We inclose statement of particulars, showing the amount of your indebtedness at ten thousand pounds—"

Breaks off, repeating.

Ten thousand pounds!

Continues.

"Should you want to contest the claim—"

Breaks off, crushing letter between hands.

Ugh! Who wants to contest their dirty claims! Every acre of the land that I possess, every farthing of the money that I don't, is theirs, so that my father's honoured name be cleared! Poor old Dad, it killed him! Well, I'm harder to kill, as every one who has done it has found out!

Looks at letter.

Confusion take the Heir of Crawford! I was paying it off as quickly as I could! We should have been quits in five years, or less!

Again looks at letter.

"Your obliged and obedient servants." Faith, the obligation isn't on my side. Why don't they sign themselves "Your obliged and obedient executioners"? Words—words—words! Let's see: who was it remarked that same?—Hamlet,

Moves about, sits on piano stool, leaning elbow on keys with discordant clash.

or some other gentleman, like myself, reduced by family afflictions to philosophy!—Words? Hard lines, rather; for, being translated, it means Sell out; Pay up; Hand over—Everything! In effect, Captain Litton, you aren't a bit better off than the street-sweeper to whom a few minutes ago you threw a light-hearted sixpence! Mustn't give him any more sixpences! How would it feel, I wonder, for him to throw me one!

Turns to piano, striking notes. Rising, takes coin from pocket, tossing and catching it, singing.

"Here's to my sixpence; my jolly, jolly sixpence! Here's to the sixpence I love as my life!

Here's a penny for to spend, and a penny for to lend,
And fourpence to take home to my poor young—"

Breaks off with sudden remembrance, and sinks into chair.

Good Lord!—Fanny! How can I meet her now, especially after what it seems they say of me! How can a fellow ask a girl to marry a beggar! And Fanny, of all girls! My poor little Fanny!

Merivale enters and stands watching Litton as the latter sits with bowed head.

I only hope she doesn't care for me—for I love her far too well to break her heart!

MERIVALE

Sneering.

You look blue, Litton!

LITTON

Raising his head.

Blood will tell, Merivale!

Merivale goes up to conservatory and stands, leaning on piano, watching. Fanny enters at window, followed by Hyacinth, who seats herself at piano and plays softly. Polly enters. They are all dressed for dinner.

FANNY

Lingering near window, watching Litton. Happily.

He has read his letter. He has come into his kingdom!

LITTON

To himself, letter in hand.

Contest the debt and compromise? Old Seton said it was perfectly feasible!—Stop a bit! What am I thinking of! I promised my father on his dying-bed!—On the one hand, faith to my dead father, and the honour of his name—and on the other, my means, my land, and my hope of winning Fanny—which to me means more than life!

With resolution.

And honour turns the scale!

FANNY

To herself, playing with a leaf of the palm.

To-night, if he loves me really I shall know it! —Ah, if—!

LITTON

To himself.

Ah, Fanny! If only I dared speak to you!

'Tis well, perhaps, that you have feared to bind your life to mine!

FANNY

To herself.

To-night I shall be the happiest woman in the world—ah, if—!

Buries her face in the roses she carries.

LITTON

To himself.

And yet—if she were a different kind of woman—if she would entrust her sweet life to my keeping—if she were poor as I, I could work for her with these two hands; we could be happy—ah, Fanny—if—!

He turns, and, seeing Fanny, rises impulsively as if to go to her. She moves as if to hold out her arms to him. Then, suddenly conscious of the letter in his hand, he turns away and sinks into the chair, his back toward her, trying to disguise his emotion. Fanny, bewildered, seems ready to break down, but, catching sight of the look of triumph on Merivale's face, restrains herself. Hyacinth's music rises to a crescendo. Litton covers his face with the hand that holds the letter, and the roses drop from Fanny's grasp.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I

ACT II

The interior of Captain Lettarblair Litton's quarters in barracks at Southampton, one week later. The place is partly dismantled, showing evidences of confusion and packing, and also the signs of recent festivities. A large supper-table stands in the middle of the floor, littered with the remains of a supper; bottles and glasses are standing about; a wine-cooler and a large silver tankard are on the floor. At the right is a window with cushioned window-seat; beyond this a door. At the back a curtained opening leads to an inner room. To the left is another door. Near the window stands a small table with a saddle on it. A red waistcoat lies on the mantel-piece; a sword hangs on the wall. By the door on the left is a small desk littered with papers and boxes of cigars. On the floor to the right stand a portmanteau and tin uniform-case marked "Captain Lettarblair Litton, First Battalion Irish Fusiliers." Fishing-rods, fur coat, pipes and miscellaneous articles add to the general disorder. A streak of sunlight, coming between the closed window-curtains, falls across the table, revealing Pinckney in mess uniform, seated with his back to the audience, his head on the supper-table, in a heavy sleep. Jorkins is heard in the inner room singing, "The hour was sad; I left the maid, A lingering farewell taking. Her sighs and tears my steps delayed; I thought her heart was breaking! In hurried words her name I blessed . . . " Soon he enters, a pile of Litton's clothes over his arm and Litton's busby on his head; pauses to look at Pinckney with a head-shake, then throws the clothes over a chair-back, blows out the candles that, though almost burnt down to their sockets, are still alight; and draws the window curtains, letting in a flood of sunshine.

JORKINS

"In hurried words her name I blessed;
I breathed the words that bind me;
I to my heart in anguish pressed

Folds and packs clothes, taking whisky flask from pocket of one garment, holding it up to light and sighing on finding it empty.

The Girl I left be'ind me!"

Takes off busby, presses it to heart before packing it.

SMITHERS

Entering cautiously by door on the left.

Where is Cap—

JORKINS

Looking up from packing.

Now, young man, who may you be, pray?

SMITHERS

I'm Smithers, from the office of Seton and Catesby, come to collect a bill from Captain Litton. Where is he?

Crossing to the right, stumbles over bottles, stubbing toes, and exclaiming.

Ouch! Where's Captain Litton?

JORKINS

I'm not giving information to-day, Mr. Smithers!

Aside.

I'd like to punch 'is 'ead! Looks for all the world like a bit of red tape 'isself!

Enter Litton in smoking-jacket, pipe in mouth, papers in hand.

LITTON

Aside, seeing Smithers.

Hullo! My friend Smithers!

SMITHERS

Very loud, to Jorkins.

Where is he, I say!

LITTON

Mr. Smithers, you're a nuisance!

SMITHERS

With importance.

I'm the law!

LITTON

Same thing!

SMITHERS

Suddenly catching sight of Pinckney, rushes at him and shakes him.

Ah! I've caught you at last!—What's the matter with him! Come, sir! Will you kindly

wake up and pay me the ten thousand pounds you owe to the Crawford estate? You promised to pay to-day! It's eleven now, and we are informed that you purpose leaving England at noon!—Come on, no trifling!

PINCKNEY

Sings drowsily.

"For a frozen corpse was he!"

LITTON

Ha, ha, ha! You'd better be careful, Mr. Smithers!

SMITHERS

Frightened.

Is he armed?

LITTON

To the teeth!

JORKINS

Indicating Smithers and restraining himself with difficulty.

I'd like to punch 'is 'ead!

PINCKNEY

Shouts in his sleep.

"Charge, Chester, charge!"

LITTON

Sorting papers at desk.

Hear him say charge? He's dreaming of a lawyer!

SMITHERS

To Litton, deferentially.

What 'd you advise me to do, sir?

LITTON

I should advise you to get out, Mr. Smithers!

Smithers hesitates.

PINCKNEY

Shouts savagely, clutching the air.

"Now could I drink hot blood!"

SMITHERS

Hurrying toward door on the left.

I'll call again, when he ain't so thirsty!—You've no idea how hard it is to get money from this Captain Litton!

LITTON

Oh, yes, I have, Mr. Smithers! I've tried it myself—and I can't get a penny!

Nods to Jorkins, who laughs.

SMITHERS

Is he a friend of yours, sir?

LITTON

Sure, but he is—a friend in need!

SMITHERS

He's a precious blackguard!

LITTON

Infuriated.

God knows I've abused him often enough myself, but I'll not hear anybody else do it, Mr. Smithers!

Shaking fist at Smithers.

SMITHERS

Oh, I say!—I'll call again!

Exit hurriedly.

JORKINS

Waving clothes-brush.

I'd like to punch 'is 'ead!

PINCKNEY

Waking.

"For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly

good fellow. He's a jolly good—" Hullo!—I thought I was in bed!

Rising, sits on edge of the table, with feet on arm of a chair.

LITTON

Bed! Bed for a soldier, indeed! Ha, ha! No, my boy! You've done the proper thing! You camped on the cold, cold supper with your martial cloak around ye! When every one had said good night this morning I found ye fast asleep on the table, snoring a love-song to the game pie! I hadn't the heart to wake ye, so out I went for a gallop over the downs and a plunge in the sea in your stead! Look at me, you dissipated ruffian, you! I'm fresh as a daisy!

Exit into inner room.

PINCKNEY

A daisy, indeed!

JORKINS

Lord love 'im! A daisy! Just like 'is father!

PINCKNEY

I don't believe I shall ever feel like a daisy again!

Tries to walk.

Jorkins, what's the matter? Why are my legs so 'fended with one 'nother, won't walk same side of way!

JORKINS

Saluting.

Supper, sir!

PINCKNEY

Puzzled.

Supper?

JORKINS

Saluting.

Champagne, sir!

PINCKNEY

Why supper? Whose champagne?

JORKINS

Captain Litton's farewell dinner at the mess last night, and supper 'ere, in our rooms on top of it! Champagne a-flowing like—champagne! Toasts proposed! Glasses a-clinking! Cries of "'Ear, 'ear!" Your recitations! Oh, Lord, them recitations!—'Ealths drunk to the valiant officer and gallant gentleman wot's leaving our midst!—

LITTON

Appearing.

Jorkins!

JORKINS

Yes, Captain?

LITTON

Shut up!

Throws a pair of top-boots that he carries to Jorkins, and exit.

JORKINS

Yes, Captain!

Catches the boots and packs them in tin box. Picks up the silver tankard, polishes it on his sleeve lovingly, while talking in a hoarse whisper to Pinckney.

And this 'ere 'andsome piece of silver as a momentum of the love of the officers of the regiment, God bless 'im!—A bloomin' loving-cup!

Sets the tankard down on floor.

PINCKNEY

Ah, I remember now! He has left the regiment, and I have joined it!

JORKINS

Aye, sir! More's the pity!

PINCKNEY

Sharply.

Eh! What's that?

JORKINS

Saluting.

I mean, more's the pity he has left it, sir!

PINCKNEY

I embark for Bombay at noon—

JORKINS

It's past eleven now, sir!

PINCKNEY

Leans head on arm, heavily.

—and at noon he starts for Arizona!

JORKINS

And I a-packing up his kit for the last time!—Lordy, it's a sad day when the pride of the regiment 'as to sell out his uniform and take to cattle-raising!

LITTON

Entering.

Jorkins!

JORKINS

Salutes.

Yes, Captain?

LITTON

Shut up!

JORKINS

Yes, Captain! But I do feel like a orphan!

To Pinckney, in a hoarse, impressive whisper.

—Sell 'is uniform and take to cattle-raising!

Litton takes a waistcoat from the mantel, throws this to Jorkins, who catches it and packs it in tin box.

All right, Captain! Lots of room in your kit!

LITTON

Glad to know I have lots of anything in my kit, Jorkins!

JORKINS

Holding up the fur coat.

Will you wear this, Captain—or shall I pack it?

LITTON

No. As the currency of the realm has given

out we'll throw what's left us to the sharks!—Let's see, now. To whom do I owe the worth of a coat?

Refers to bills.

PINCKNEY

A coat would seem naturally to revert to a tailor!

LITTON

Taps Pinckney on head.

'Tisn't his figure, my boy, so it hardly would be fitting, d'ye see! Here's a small sum owing to the daily paper.

Hands a bill to Pinckney, who passes it on to Jorkins.

Tell the fellow the coat will keep up his circulation!

JORKINS

Taking fishing-rods from under saddle.

This here fishing-gear, sir—?

PINCKNEY

Spare the rod!

LITTON

Not at all! Use it to tackle the shoemaker!

Checking off bills. Jorkins drags tin box into inner room.

PINCKNEY

Takes a soda-water bottle and a corkscrew from table. Sits in window-seat.

How about Johnson, the hatter?

LITTON

Oh, we've choked him off with the contents of the wine-cellar!

PINCKNEY

Lucky dog!

LITTON

Hm! He seemed rather mad!

JORKINS

Appearing with a statue of Venus.

Haberdasher sent back the Venus, Captain! He was mad as the hatter! Said he wouldn't take her in payment because she was broke!

LITTON

Well, now, haberdash it all, I sent her in payment because I was broke!

Jorkins guffaws.

He needn't have been annoyed with her, poor dear! Seeing she's quite *armless!*

JORKINS

Lord forgive 'im! 'Armless! Just like his father!—I'll give her to the charwoman!

Goes out with statue.

LITTON

Consulting note-book.

Now let's see where we stand!—Amount due—ten thousand. In hand from mortgage on Glenmurra—my little bit of land Glenmurra—

JORKINS

Entering. Sadly.

Glenmurra!

LITTON

Sale of stocks, bonds, personal effects—nine thousand eight—two hundred to be raised before

noon!—But where to raise it! Jorkins, you beggar, where shall I get two hundred pounds?

JORKINS

Hesitates, to make sure that Pinckney does not hear.

Captain—I served your father before I served you—

Again hesitates.

—You've both of you called me "hold idiot" often enough!—But—

Again makes sure that Pinckney does not hear.

—I've always been sensible enough hold idiot to put by a little something for a rainy day!—Captain—

More hesitation.

—I've got over three hundred pound!

LITTON

Removes pipe from mouth.

Jorkins!

JORKINS

Yes, Captain?

LITTON

Sternly.

Shut up!

JORKINS

Hurt.

Yes, Captain!

LITTON

Suddenly seizing Jorkins by back of neck.

Do you think, you dear, sensible old idiot, that I'd borrow the umbrella you have put up with so much trouble, and leave you to get wet through in your old age? Why, I—I—

Shaking Jorkins gently to conceal emotion.

JORKINS

Captain!

LITTON

Well, Jorkins?

JORKINS

Excuse the liberty, Captain, but—SHUT UP!

Litton, moved, grasps Jorkins' hand and turns away.

PINCKNEY

At window, opens bottle with loud report and fills a glass.

Ah! Litton, have you the time?

LITTON

Exchanging a meaning glance with Jorkins.

The time, is it?

PINCKNEY

About to drink, pauses.

What, isn't your watch going?

LITTON

Stooping, picks up plate and bottle from floor and sets them on table.

Gone!

PINCKNEY

Commiseratingly.

Phew!

Drinks.

JORKINS

And his studs—and his pictures—and his—everything!

Throws topcoat over arm, lifts portmanteau from corner and sets it on the chair, flinging the coat over it so that Litton's name is concealed.

'E's got nothing left now except me and the mare Kitty Tyrrell!

LITTON

Placing chair by the desk.

Poor dear Kitty, I thought I might contrive to keep her—but 'twill be all I can do to keep myself going, without a horse! Come, boys! Lend a hand with this!

Takes hold of supper-table to move it, Jorkins assisting. Pinckney runs to help. They talk while carrying table into inner room.

JORKINS

Sighing.

Everything a-going—even the mare!

LITTON

Trying to conceal emotion.

My beautiful—! Ah, as the old song says, "'Tis money will make the mare to go!"

PINCKNEY

Poor old chap! Well, you ought to get a good price for her!

LITTON

I'd sooner get her a good master!

PINCKNEY

Macdowell wants her badly!

LITTON

Macdowell can stay wanting her! He'd ride her to death inside a week, my precious Kitty! Besides, she'd never put up with his language!

Enter Smithers, left.

SMITHERS

I'll nab him this time, sure as—

LITTON

Seeing Smithers, makes a rush at him and pushes him out.

Ah, look at him now, will ye!

SMITHERS

Struggling.

Sir, I come from the office of—

LITTON

The devil ye do!

Bangs door and holds it.

Jorkins, come and help me keep out the insolence of office till I've raised two hundred pounds! If

I set eyes on him again I shall kill him for a dead certainty!

PINCKNEY

Running to the door and leaning against it.

And serve him jolly well right!

JORKINS

Doing the same.

Blooming right!

LITTON

Two hundred—

Running to door right. Seizes hat from saddle, in passing, and sticks it on back of head. Catching sight of Willoughby, pauses at window.

There's Lord Willoughby! I'll make him buy the mare!—Willoughby!—Now Blarney befriend me!—Here, Willoughby!

Calls from window. Leaps into saddle.

WILLOUGHBY

Outside.

Hullo, dear boy!

LITTON

Beckoning.

Come over here! I want to whisper to ye!—

Lord, Willoughby, if it's the pace that kills you'll live to be immortal!

SMITHERS

Outside, knocks, and forces door open.

You open this door, or I'll—

LITTON

Don't let him in!

SMITHERS

Forcing door open. Pinckney and Jorkins thrust him out.

Here! You—

PINCKNEY

Leaning against door.

Bolt the door!

JORKINS

Leans against door.

There ain't no bolt, sir!

LITTON

I say, Willoughby, don't you want to buy my Kitty Tyrrell?

JORKINS

Selling the mare! He'll sell me next!

PINCKNEY

He'd have to give you away!

WILLOUGHBY

Outside.

Hm! Why, do you want to sell her?

LITTON

Eh! What! Want to! Is it I?—I need the money! How much will you give?

WILLOUGHBY

Don't think I want to buy a horse.

LITTON

What, don't think you want to buy a horse? But I know you do! Would ye ride to the wars on a donkey?

SMITHERS

Forces door open.

I insist—

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Turning, close door, wedging Smithers' head in.

Do you, now!

SMITHERS

Half-strangled.

Ow!

LITTON

To Willoughby.

Never mind him! Only an impudent rascal of a lawyer's clerk!

SMITHERS

In strangled tones.

Captain Litton, I insist on seeing you!

LITTON

Well, haven't ye any eyes in your head?

PINCKNEY

Ha, ha, they'll pop out in a minute!

SMITHERS

Thrusts left hand in.

Are you Captain Litton?

LITTON

Faith, I'm a speaking likeness of him!

SMITHERS

I represent Seton and Catesby and I—

Shouts as Jorkins strikes down his hand and kicks him out.

LITTON

Eh, Willoughby? Send him about his business? I'm his business at the minute!—So I will, dear boy, as soon as you pay me for the mare! How much do you bid?

SMITHERS

I say—

Pushes door open with such force that Pinckney and Jorkins are thrown forward on to the desk. He braces door open with hands and feet, leaning back against frame.

I'd have you know, sir, that my time's worth money!

LITTON

Right you are! So's mine. That's why I sold my watch!

"I represent Seton and Catesby, and I—" *Page 96*

JORKINS AND PINCKNEY

Turning on Smithers, Jorkins striking down his hands.

Out with him!

They slam the door and hold it.

LITTON

Well, Willoughby, name your price! What's that I hear! One hundred and fifty—

JORKINS

Disgusted.

One hundred and fifty for a mare like that! Why, her tail's worth the money!

LITTON

You're daft, my boy! It's worth that to look at her! I want you to have her, Willoughby, because you'll treat her well! I know you of old, Willoughby! You'd take the bit from your own mouth to put it into your horse's!

JORKINS

With feeling.

That he would, bless him!

LITTON

Come, make it two hundred!

JORKINS

In despair.

Two hundred for a mare like that!

LITTON

Two gentlemen behind me are bidding at fast and furious rates!

Aside to Pinckney and Jorkins.

—Bid, hang you!

JORKINS

Rushing about, excited.

Six 'undred—

LITTON

Six hundred—

JORKINS

Lifts up a chair and sets it down with emphasis.

If I 'ad it!

LITTON

Six hundred—going at six hundred!

PINCKNEY

Running forward.

A thousand!

LITTON

A thousand!

PINCKNEY

If I could beg, borrow, or steal it!

LITTON

A thousand I am bid! Going at a thousand—

As Pinckney leaves the door Smithers stumbles in with a jerk.

SMITHERS

Angrily.

Drat it!

Recovers balance and advances.

LITTON

—At a thousand!

Sees Smithers.

Ah, Mr. Smithers! What do you bid?

SMITHERS

Angrily shaking his cane.

I bid you pay this money, sir!

LITTON

Ha, ha! Look at the repartee of him!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Seize Smithers and run him. He blocks his own exit with cane; accordingly they pull him back a few steps.

Ha, ha!

LITTON

Three hundred to you, Willoughby, and Smithers thrown in!

JORKINS AND PINCKNEY

They throw Smithers out and slam door, then lean against it.

And Smithers thrown out!

LITTON

Well, then, make it two-sixty!

JORKINS

Outraged.

Two-sixty for a mare like that!

LITTON

Come, now, you know you're getting her for a song!

"Well, then, make it two-sixty!" *Page 100*

Main

JORKINS

A song! Why she's worth a whole blooming hopera!

PINCKNEY

Aye! Including the chorus!

WILLOUGHBY

Can't sing, dear boy!

LITTON

Well, now, Willoughby, you shall have her for two hundred and fifty if you'll refrain from refraining! Two hundred and fifty pounds for the sweetest thing in the world, with her white stockings and her new shoes,—and a saddle that would cost you twenty guineas into the bargain!

Jumps off saddle and holds it up at window.

JORKINS

In despair.

Now he's going to sell the saddle!

LITTON

The loveliest saddle! Many's the time it has borne me on her back!

JORKINS

Almost crying.

She was born with that saddle!

LITTON

Good-bye to your jibes, Kitty! Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the stable in a roar! Going at two hundred—

JORKINS

Two 'undred for a 'orse like that!

LITTON

Think of her! A coat like sealskin! Think of her sire—her dam!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

They lift their hands, as if this were the climax, and in so doing move slightly from the door. Smithers opens it, at which they turn, as if on a pivot, and fall against it, with an exclamation of triumph.

LITTON

At window, to Willoughby.

She loves a soldier!

Again leaps into saddle.

JORKINS

That she does, God bless her!

LITTON

And adores a fight!

JORKINS AND PINCKNEY

Excited.

A fight, ha, ha!

LITTON

Seizes a pen and uses this as if it were a whip, grasping the table-cover like reins.

She can run a mile in one-thirty!

JORKINS

No, no! One-twenty!

LITTON

Which is convenient if you get licked!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Licked! Never!

LITTON

She'll jump six feet in the air, if you're victorious!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Jumping wildly into the air.

Hurrah! Victorious!

WILLOUGHBY

Outside.

Sixteen hands, d'ye say?

LITTON

What? Aye, sixteen hands and every one of them a dream and all her legs a poem!

JORKINS

I shall cry in a minute!

LITTON

Come, say two hundred! Going, going—

SMITHERS

Pushing door open.

No, sir, I'm not going until—

Jorkins and Pinckney slam the door, shutting him out.

LITTON

Jumping off saddle and throwing it out of window.

Gone!—Kitty Tyrrell knocked down to Lord

" Kitty Tyrrell knocked down to Lord Willoughby " *Page 104*

Mau

Willoughby at two hundred pounds!—The first time I ever knocked down a lady in all my life!—All right, Willoughby, throw the notes up here; I'll catch 'em!—

To Jorkins and Pinckney.

—Let him in!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

They open the door wide suddenly, so that Smithers falls forward on the floor, his head in front of the tiger rug. Jorkins and Pinckney, in their endeavors to arrest him, themselves fall on top of him. They rise immediately and assist Smithers, who is greatly frightened at seeing the tiger's head, and place him in chair.

In with you!

LITTON

Catching bundle of bank-notes at window.

Thanks, old man!

Runs to Smithers and thrusts these into his right hand.

There's the money you're so hungry for! I wish you were the Heir of Crawford himself that it might choke you! Much good 'twill do ye, ye limb of the law! It's blood money, that's what it is! And here's the rest of the ten thousand pounds!

Goes to desk, fetches more bank-notes and thrusts them into Smithers' hands.

—Ah, 'tis suffocated ye are! Here, take a drink!

Takes bottle from cooler on floor and gives this to Smithers.

Take a cigar!

Gets box of cigars from desk and thrusts this into his arms.

JORKINS

Getting a cigar from the box and thrusting it into Smithers' mouth.

Yes, take a cigar!

LITTON

Picking up Smithers' hat and smashing it over his eyes.

Take your hat!

PINCKNEY

Giving the hat an extra smash.

Yes, take your hat!

LITTON

Thrusting Smithers' cane under his arm.

Take your cane—Take a pauper's blessing, and the devil take you!

Goes up to supper-table and gets a bottle of champagne.

Now, Jorkins, you old orphan; Pinckney, my warrior—a toast! A toast!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Going up to table.

A toast! A toast!

Pinckney brings one glass, Jorkins two.

LITTON

Knocking off head of bottle and pouring out wine.

Here's to my having paid all I owe! And here's good faring to a beggar who, having sold even his horse, will have to follow mounted beggars afoot! Hip, hip, hoorah!

Taking glass from Jorkins, drinks. Pours wine over Smithers, who, in trying to dodge it, stumbles over tiger's head.

JORKINS

Hoorah!

PINCKNEY

Hoorah!

PINCKNEY AND JORKINS

Sing.

For he's a jolly good fellow,

For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say we all of us!

LITTON

And now I'll go change my coat!—Jorkins, get a receipt from him.

Laughing, shakes fist at Smithers. Throws glass on supper-table in passing, and exit. Smithers also follows Litton, but is confronted by Pinckney as the latter turns, and, frightened, backs, bumps into Jorkins, who is removing the rugs. In terror he jumps aside and sits in chair, hugging bottle and box of cigars.

JORKINS

Dismally.

For he's a jolly good fell—

Suddenly catching sight of Smithers, hoists him by his collar and propels him toward door.

'Ere! You come on and give us that bloomin' receipt!

In passing the cooler he unconsciously kicks it on Smithers' toes at every step, Smithers exclaiming.

We're off to India, bloomin' 'ot! He's off to Harizona, bloomin' cold! There ain't no bloom-

" Here's to having paid all I owe ! " *Page 107*

Mau

in' comfort in this bloomin' world. 'Ere, come on and give us that receipt!

Kicks Smithers off, then the cooler, and exit, closing door.

PINCKNEY

Wipes chair with napkin which he finds hanging over its back. Sits, stretching out legs and contemplating them admiringly.

Ha, ha! I wonder if Polly will admire my uniform! Strange that the adoration I used to feel for Fanny is unchanged—only its present object is called Polly!

Knock at door.

Come in!

Knock repeated.

Come in, hang you!

Runs to door and throws it open with such violence that the handle comes off in his hand.

DEAN

Outside, reproving.

Pinckney!

PINCKNEY

Oh, Lord! The Dean!

Drops handle by door and runs off into inner room, closing curtains behind him. Enter the Dean, Hyacinth, Polly and Merivale.

HYACINTH

Here we are at last!

POLLY

Advancing, unconsciously pushing the handle a few feet from the door.

So these are a soldier's quarters!

JORKINS

Entering, gleefully rubbing hands.

Ha, ha! I *'ave* punched 'is 'ead!

Nearly collides with Hyacinth. Salutes.

Beg pardon, ma'am! Your servant, your Reverence and Ladies!

Eyes Merivale with suspicion.

DEAN

Good morning, Jorkins! Where is Captain Litton?

POLLY

Where is Mr. Pinckney?

JORKINS

Sadly.

Captain Litton ain't no more!

ALL

Amazed.

What?

HYACINTH

You mean—dead!

Sinks into chair.

JORKINS

No, no! He ain't captain no more!

ALL

Amazed.

What!

MERIVALE

Lolling in window seat.

Humph!

JORKINS

Moving table away from window, and setting it against wall.

I will announce you to the captain-as-was!

HYACINTH

Not captain any more!

MERIVALE

Perhaps he was obliged to send in his papers!

POLLY

Has picked up the tankard and examined it.

This sounds like it!

"To Captain Litton on his retirement from the Irish Fusiliers with the love of his brother officers"—Look!

Carries it to Hyacinth.

HYACINTH

Taking tankard, reads.

"Gallant charge against Arabi Pasha, Abu Goum." What chivalry!

Passes tankard to Dean.

DEAN

Reads.

Dear me—"Crossed the Irrawaddy with despatches, with bullets whizzing round him!" Just like him!

JORKINS

Just like 'is father!

Exit, drawing curtains sharply behind him.

MERIVALE

Impressively.

All the same, to my mind his leaving the army

looks suspicious—and, mark my words, you won't get at the truth of the story!

Enter Litton.

LITTON

Throws arms about Dean.

Ah, Uncle Ambrose!

DEAN

My dear boy!

HYACINTH

With extended hand.

The hero of Rangoon!

LITTON

Kissing her hand.

Dear lady—such as you make heroes of mere men!

POLLY

We've come to bid Percy and you God-speed!

LITTON

Polly, my angel!

Takes tankard from Dean and sets it on desk.

MERIVALE

I had a fancy to see the last of you, Litton!

LITTON

Kissing hand to him.

God bless ye, Merivale!

DEAN

But, Lettarblair, what is this I hear! Why have you left the service?

HYACINTH

Going to chair, sits.

Yes, why?

MERIVALE

Sneering.

Yes, why?

LITTON

To Dean.

Well, sir, the fact is, a sudden drain on my resources has left me an amiable pauper!

DEAN AND HYACINTH

A pauper!

POLLY

Aside.

Oh! With ten thousand pounds in his pocket!

DEAN

Ah, that explains the note you left for me the day you left Beechwood so—er—hurriedly!

Taking note from pocket, and reading from it.

"Altered circumstances compel me to beg for a postponement of our interview—"

HYACINTH

Will you not tell us the cause of your altered circumstances?

LITTON

Well, no, please. I don't care to talk about it —save to assure you 'tis nothing I need blush for!

MERIVALE

Insultingly.

Except, perhaps, with an inherited blush!

LITTON

Determined not to quarrel with him.

I'll leave ye a blush in my will, Merivale, since nature neglected to provide for ye!

Aside.

Confound him, can he have heard of my father's troubles?

Aloud, striving to speak jauntily.

I'm off to Arizona this blessed hour!

POLLY

Aside, shocked.

With Fanny's money!

LITTON

I'm going on a cattle-ranch!

DEAN

Amazed.

Arizona! Well, well!

HYACINTH

Rather shocked.

A cattle ranch! Dear, dear!

LITTON

An old comrade of mine has made a pot of money there! I've got youth and strength—and the sweetest liver ye ever set eyes on in all your life!

HYACINTH

Quite shocked.

Oh, Lettarblair!

Polly goes over to Litton on his left, as if striving to solve the puzzle.

MERIVALE

Rising ponderously.

Hope you won't find you've mistaken your calling, Litton!

DEAN

Mr. Merivale! The captain's honourable record

Points to tankard.

bespeaks his success in his bucolic venture!

MERIVALE

Oh, if everything is to be measured by a man's military experience—

Shrugging shoulders.

LITTON

Yet some men get on who are neither military nor civil, Merivale!

DEAN

Gentlemen! Lettarblair, I beg—

MERIVALE

Still, you must admit it is rather a come-down! —Cattle!

LITTON

Hotly.

God knows 'tis never a dumb beast yet from whom I've had the unkind word, Merivale, and—

Hyacinth gives a slight shriek.

DEAN

Rising.

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Let us have peace!

MERIVALE

Swaggers to door.

I must be off! I left Fanny with the Colonel's wife! I promised to call for her!

LITTON

Airily.

Hope you won't find you've mistaken your calling, Merivale!

Merivale gives him a black look. Exit. Enter Pinckney, in full uniform, with great display, saluting on all sides. All exclaim.

PINCKNEY

How do you like my uniform?

POLLY

Admiringly.

Oh, Percy, it is beautiful—and so becoming!

Dean and Hyacinth murmur assent.

PINCKNEY

I cut a better figure this way than copying sermons, eh, Dean?

DEAN

Pinckney! The pen, sir, we are told, is mightier than—

PINCKNEY

Aye, but I'll lay you anything you please I shall make my mark better with the sword! And I shall have a chance to try my hand at it! The orderly officer of the day has just galloped into the square with a despatch from the general of the district, and—

Noise heard outside.

—there's quite an excitement!

Goes to window.

POLLY

Runs to window.

Oh, let's see!

Sits in upper end of window-seat.

HYACINTH

Going to window and stands, looking out.

Dear, dear!

DEAN

Following Hyacinth.

What is it all about?

LITTON

Detaining Dean.

Dear Uncle Ambrose—I shall be off to Liverpool in a few minutes, and then—across the seas! I asked you to postpone our interview concerning Fanny till I could rid myself of a debt! But nothing can change my love for her! Believe that! Nothing! I am going to try to earn at least a decent living in the hope that some day I may persuade her to share it with me!

DEAN

Well, well, Lettarblair, there is no hurry! Why not make it a matter of mutual contemplation for a period—say for ten years!

LITTON

Overcome.

Ten years—Fanny!

DEAN

There is Scriptural authority! Jacob served twice seven years for his Rachel!

LITTON

Sure, then, Jacob was no Irishman, or he'd have taken his Rachel at the other end of the bargain!

DEAN

Well, well! I suppose young people will be young people!

Indulgently.

LITTON

Ah, Uncle Ambrose—but only while they're young!

HYACINTH

Ambrose! We're going out to see what it all means!

Moving toward door.

DEAN

Taking hat from top of portmanteau where he placed it on entering, he gives Hyacinth his arm, and leads her out.

Allow me to attend you!

POLLY

Running to Litton. In undertone.

Lettarblair—Don't fail to see Fanny!—You owe her an explanation! She's very angry with you!

Runs to Pinckney who is waiting for her at door, takes his arm. They go out.

LITTON

To himself.

Angry—Fanny—with me! Perhaps that's a sign of affection—but I'd a handful sooner have the thing signified!

Sees Willoughby from window.

Hullo, Willoughby! Have you seen Kitty Tyrrell?

WILLOUGHBY

Outside.

Yes; she's a fine mare, my boy!

Enter Smithers in a battered condition.

SMITHERS

Captain Litton—

LITTON

At window.

Isn't she a beauty!

SMITHERS

Captain Litton—

LITTON

'Twas thanks to her I got out of my last engagement at Khartoum with half a whole skin!

SMITHERS

Captain Litton, sir, I—

LITTON

She's worth a fortune! A fortune!

SMITHERS

A fortune, eh?—Captain Litton, your servant has violently assaulted my person! He has struck, pinched, kicked and otherwise injured my tenderest—

Reaching out to grasp hold of Litton.

LITTON

To Willoughby.

Eh?—I'll come down to you!

Leaps out of window.

SMITHERS

Baffled.

Why—where is he!—

Looks out of window.

Oh, there—! Captain Litton, I require compensation! I—

LITTON

Outside.

Oh, go to the devil!

SMITHERS

Very well, sir! I will wait here till you return, like patience on a window-sill!

Sits on sill, hidden by curtains.
Enter Merivale and Fanny.

FANNY

Breathlessly.

Quick, quick! I saw Captain Litton out there! I wish to avoid him!—Why—you said—

Looks about surprised.

Where are they all?

MERIVALE

They must have just stepped outside! They'll be back directly! Better wait!

FANNY

Hesitatingly.

You are sure—these are Pinckney's rooms?

MERIVALE

Of course! Come, Fanny! You never give me a chance to talk to you alone!

FANNY

You know I—

Moves toward door.

MERIVALE

Oh, if you want to put yourself in the way of meeting Litton!—

FANNY

No, no!—I—No, no!

Deciding to remain.

Anything but that!—

To herself.

Surely he gave some reason for wanting to go to Arizona!

MERIVALE

Shrugging shoulders.

When a fellow is up to the ears in debt—

FANNY

Impossible! I know—I am sure that he has the wherewithal to pay his debts!

MERIVALE

My dear child, it does not therefore follow that he pays them! Can nothing convince a woman's reason?

FANNY

To herself.

Nothing, when her heart tells another story!

SMITHERS

Peeping out.

He has struck, pinched, kicked, and otherwise injured my tenderest—

MERIVALE

Hullo! Who are you?

SMITHERS

I beg pardon, sir! I'm waiting for Captain Litton! Is he a friend of yours?

MERIVALE

No, indeed, the fellow is no friend of mine!

SMITHERS

You may congratulate yourself, sir! I have never had to collect a debt from a more rascally scapegrace!

MERIVALE

Pleased, watching the effect on Fanny.

Come, come, that's a strong statement!

FANNY

Captain Litton is an honourable man! I am sure that he will—

SMITHERS

An honourable man! Look at the money he squanders at my client's expense!

Opens curtains, disclosing supper-table.

Honourable! When I myself heard him boasting of his engagement to a lady of large fortune!

Fanny involuntarily exclaims.

Ah, you know the Captain!

FANNY

No! I—I have never known him!

SMITHERS

Well, I haven't finished with him yet!—I'll call again!

At door turns back and stares at Merivale, who returns the stare. Aside.

Now where have I seen him before!—Ha, I remember—in the Bank of Burmah!—

Exit, muttering.

He has struck, pinched, kicked, and otherwise injured my tenderest—

MERIVALE

Going to Fanny.

Fanny, why do you trouble yourself about a fellow like Litton! Why not give me the right to protect you!

FANNY

I shall never marry any one!

Rises.

MERIVALE

Because you love him!

FANNY

I will tell you what I have never told him—that I have loved him better than my life!

Goes to window.

MERIVALE

Following her, eagerly.

But now—knowing him for what he is?

FANNY

I love the man I thought him to be!

MERIVALE

Then if he again asks you to marry him—?

FANNY

He would never dare!

MERIVALE

He? Of course he will! You know I advised you not to come to-day!

FANNY

Facing on him.

What do you mean!

MERIVALE

The Dean—every one expecting it—it is forced upon him!

FANNY

Oh!—I'll go home!—I'll tell them I feel ill!

MERIVALE

I'll take you myself!—Wait here while I get the carriage—I'll only be a minute—

Hurried exit.

FANNY

Going to window.

Oh, oh, oh! As soon as he had money he went away—only leaving this letter for me—that was waiting for him!

Taking letter from breast reads.

"A sudden change in my fortunes takes me from you! I dare not ask you to marry me just yet!—Perhaps in a year or two—Fanny, dear, will you not wait for me? Your lover, Lettarblair?"—Oh, oh, oh!

Sits. Polly and Pinckney enter, breathless.

POLLY

Agitated.

Oh, Fanny—they say there may be war!

Sinks into window-seat.

PINCKNEY

I might be shot—or lose a leg! Polly, how could you stand having a wooden leg attached to you for life?

POLLY

Why not? You already have a heart of oak!

Bravely.

There, there—

Rises, and pushes him off into inner room.

Go finish your packing!

Goes half-crying to Fanny.

Oh, Fanny—how hard it is to part with—those you love, and not know if you will ever see them again!

FANNY

Half-crying.

Yes, Polly—but it is hardest of all to realise that you ought not to have loved them, and to pray that you may never see them again!

POLLY

What is it, dear? Has not Lettarblair explained about the money?

FANNY

I will not give him the opportunity! He is unworthy of it!

POLLY

I don't believe he took it! He received the order—and he left Beechwood immediately—but that doesn't prove he made use of it!

FANNY

Oh, Polly, do you really believe that?

POLLY

I'll be sure of it! I'll go find out! Wasn't the the order on the Southampton Bank?

FANNY

No; I had them send it to Lettarblair through an order on the Bank of Burmah in London! I did it that roundabout way so that he should never trace it—never guess!

POLLY

Even so, the bank here would know if the money had been drawn!

FANNY

True! Oh, Polly, you darling! Here, I'll write a line to ask them!

Writing a message on her card.

POLLY

It is near by! Percy shall come with me!

Calls.

Percy!

FANNY

Giving Polly card.

But Mr. Pinckney mustn't know!

POLLY

He shall wait outside!

Pinckney enters.

PINCKNEY

Well?

POLLY

Taking his arm.

Come!

PINCKNEY

Devotedly.

Anywhere!—But, where?

POLLY

Pushing him to door.

Never mind!

PINCKNEY

Aye, aye, sir!

Salutes, takes coat from portmanteau in passing, exposing Litton's name to view.

POLLY

To Fanny.

You wait here—and in ten minutes I'll bring you good news—

Kisses Fanny.

—if you care for him!

Exit with Pinckney, unconsciously shutting tail of Fanny's skirt in door.

FANNY

Leaning back against door.

If I care for him!—Ah, if I might only speak! It's a wretched thing to be a woman! If we could only woo I might tell him all that's in my heart. I could ask him to explain—but I must see him go away without a word!—Oh, to be a man that I might say: "Did you get the money?

"Why, then, these are his rooms!" *Page 135*

What does it all mean? Why do you go away? —Stay! I love you!"—If only I were a man long enough to say that—and then a woman again to hear him answer me!

Her right hand falls on sword that is standing against wall. She picks it up and reads the tag on it.

"Captain Lettarblair Litton—Steamer Majestic —New York for Arizona."

Looks about, sees name on portmanteau.

Why, then, these are his rooms!—Oh, I mustn't wait here! I must—

Turning to go, finds skirt caught. Pulls at it, laughing.

Dear me!

Tries to open door.

—Oh, the handle's gone!

Tugs skirt harder. Beats on door, calling; then waves gloves from window.

Uncle Ambrose! Polly! Francis Merivale! Somebody!—Oh, what shall I do!

Considers. Begins to unfasten skirt, then laughing, changes mind.

Oh, no! I couldn't go out without it!—Oh, the shame of it if he should come in and find me here!

Tugs angrily. Suddenly sees handle.

Why, there's the handle!

Goes toward it hastily, but is unable to reach it.

What shall I do!—Ah, this—!

Sees sword, grasps it, and tries to reach handle, only knocking it further from her. Makes futile strokes.

Oh, I could cry with rage!—Why don't they have longer swords!—Ah, this!

Puts scabbard partly on sword to lengthen it, and makes more futile efforts, finally dropping scabbard. Sits despairingly on floor, chin on sword hilt.

What shall I do!

LITTON

Under the window, outside.

All right, Willoughby! Be good to her, poor dear!

FANNY

He's there!—That handle—I must get it!

Rises, struggling with dress, and again vainly trying to get handle.

LITTON

To Willoughby, outside.

Alas, ready money outweighs affection! Good-by! Good-by!

"Why, there's the handle!" *Page 136*

Mau

FANNY

Ah! Ready money outweighs affection! I *must* get it!—Of course ready money outweighs affection!

LITTON

Climbs in at window, and sits on sill.

I do believe this wet thing in my eye's a tear!

Suddenly sees Fanny, but as her hand is up to her face, at first does not recognise her. Goes in front of her, amazed. Seeing him, she falls back against the door with a cry of rage.

Fanny!—It's Fanny! Fanny!

Joyfully, approaching her.

FANNY

Warding him off with sword.

Stand back! Don't dare come near me!

LITTON

Fanny, I did not venture to hope for this meeting. But I am so happy you are here!

FANNY

Keeping him back with sword.

Don't speak to me! Stand back!

LITTON

Fanny—I have so much to say to you! I fear you have misjudged me! I—

FANNY

With scorn.

Oh, no! I have not misjudged you!

LITTON

Ah, now, Fanny! You're angry!

FANNY

Loftily.

Angry! Why should I be angry!

LITTON

Well, dear, I left abruptly! I owe you some further explanation!

FANNY

Oh, no! You owe me nothing!

LITTON

Ah, Fanny, I have to go away! Let me tell you—

"Stand back!" *Page 137*

M-10U

FANNY

Aside.

I dare not trust myself!

To Litton, with hauteur.

Captain Litton, you will pardon me, but I also have to go away! My friends are waiting for me!

Litton sits at desk, face in hands.

Good day!

Litton turns and bows.

She starts to go with dignity, but is detained by her skirt. There is a pause during which she looks despairingly at handle, then angrily at Litton. Clears throat to speak to him, but changes her mind. Waves handkerchief out of window. Overcome with anger and disappointment, coughs.

A-hem!

LITTON

Turns quickly; joyfully springs up.

Ah, now, Fanny—you can't go!

FANNY

Aside, angrily.

No, I can't!

LITTON

Approaching her.

Dear Fanny, we mustn't part in anger! You will hear me!

FANNY

Aside, feeling skirt, fearfully.

It's coming off!

Pointing to handle.

Give me that!

LITTON

Puzzled.

What?

FANNY

Stormily.

That—that—that!

LITTON

Seeing handle, puzzled.

What, that!

–FANNY

Yes, I want it! Why don't you give it me!

LITTON

Touching handle with foot, then staring at Fanny.

What, that?

FANNY

Yes, that!

LITTON

Picking up handle.

Well, but now what's the good of it to ye? 'Tis such a silly thing to be wanting!

Tosses it up and catches it.

FANNY

Reaching for it vainly.

Oh! I HATE you!

LITTON

Laughs.

Forgive me, Fanny—but 'tis such a queer keepsake—for that's what you must want it for, though you won't give me the satisfaction of saying so! But don't take the lock of the door; take a lock of my hair!

FANNY

Furious.

Oh, I'll not stay here to be laughed at! Let me go, I command you!

LITTON

Surprised.

But—dearly as I love to have you, I'm not detaining you!

FANNY

I can't get away!—I'm caught in the door!

LITTON

The devil ye are!

Drops handle and goes to her.

Fanny, this is the work of Providence! The gods meant that you should hear me—and you shall!—Oh, I know what you must think—

FANNY

I will not hear you!

Puts hands to ears.

I will not!—You call yourself a soldier! Oh, this is brave, is it not!

LITTON

Taking her hands from her ears and holding them.

Fanny—I must speak—I must tell you—

FANNY

I will not hear you!

Snatches away her hands and again covers ears.

Oh, you are cruel! Let me go!

Cries.

LITTON

Hastening to her.

Ah, Fanny, dearest, I'm a brute! Ah, now, let me dry your eyes!

Trying to dry her eyes with his handkerchief.

FANNY

Pushing him from her.

How dare you! Oh, the shame of it!

LITTON

Hurt and bewildered.

Fanny!

FANNY

I know everything!

LITTON

Eh! You know of my obligation?

FANNY

Yes, yes, I know!

LITTON

I couldn't ask ye to share it!

FANNY

No, no! I know!—Let me go!

LITTON

The difference between us is too great!

FANNY

Aside, turning from him.

Much—*much*—MUCH too great!

Leans, face buried in hands, against door.

The money has turned his brain!

LITTON

Sadly.

Fanny, Fanny, have you no kind word for me at parting? It's a terrible thing to go away with nothing to look forward to but what ye leave behind you!—My only comfort is the thought that's breaking my heart: that you don't care!—

Tries to take down her hands.

I leave England in a few hours—but I will come back in a few years! If I dared ask you to wait —Fanny, I can't bear your tears!—Don't, don't cry, dear heart! You must see that what I have

done is for the best!—I couldn't ask you to be my wife yet!—Fanny, please don't cry!—Damn the money!—I beg your pardon, Fanny! Say good-bye! Fanny, I love you better than life itself! I love you—Don't cry!—Ask me to stay —and—Fanny, now Fanny, my sweet sweetheart—

Fanny utters a cry, and pushes him from her. The door opens, releasing her. She runs across the room, crying hysterically.
Enter Merivale.

MERIVALE

Fanny, the trap's ready.

Sees Litton.

Has that—?

With angry suspicion.

Enter Polly, pale and breathless, followed by Pinckney, the Dean and Hyacinth.

POLLY

Fanny! Fanny!

In undertone.

It is true—the money has been drawn—every penny!

FANNY

Shudders.

Ah!—

Turns to Merivale.

Forgive my having doubted you!

Merivale, relieved, takes her hand.

DEAN

My children, Fanny and Lettarblair, is it your desire that I join your hands in betrothal before you part?

MERIVALE

Approaching.

No! It is impossible!

LITTON

Starts forward to resent this, but checks himself.

I thank you, Dean, but I can not invite Fanny to share my poverty!

FANNY

Aside to Polly.

Poverty!

MERIVALE

You mean disgrace!

LITTON

What do you mean?

DEAN

Gentlemen—!

MERIVALE

Pardon, Dean, but I know Litton to be encumbered with a discreditable debt!

DEAN

Discreditable? Litton, explain! Merivale, I demand an explanation!

MERIVALE

Litton tries to hush it up—but it is the result of a dishonourable business transaction of his father's!

LITTON

You cur!—Before God he was innocent!

MERIVALE

Playing with his gloves.

Your word suffices for your friends, Captain Litton, but the world would call him an embezzler!

LITTON

Snatches Merivale's gloves, and slaps his face with them.

You liar!

Merivale makes a blow at Litton, but is caught from behind by Pinckney, and forced into chair.

If there's a God in Heaven you shall pay for this!

MERIVALE

Between clenched teeth.

Yes, I will pay for this!

FANNY

To Merivale.

Oh, if you have any shame—

LITTON

Dear old Dad!

MERIVALE

To Fanny.

I must protect you!

LITTON

Has Miss Hadden given you the right to protect her?

FANNY

How dare you ask! You!

"You cur!" *Page 147*

LITTON

Fanny, I dare all! I am penniless, but not disgraced! If you love me—Fanny, will you be my wife?

FANNY

Vehemently.

Finally and for ever—NO!

Litton turns away, broken-hearted. Loud shouts outside and first bugle call. Enter Jorkins in full marching array, running.

JORKINS

Master—master—it's war, master! War!

ALL

War?

Commands heard outside, "Irish Fusiliers! By Companies!" "Form Fours!" "By the right!" etc. "Quick March!" Drum-beat, and fife. *The Girl I left Behind Me!* Marching.

JORKINS

Sepoys have risen! We're ordered to active service!

ALL

Active service!

Pinckney embraces Polly, shakes hands hastily with the others, and again embraces Polly, placing her half-fainting in window-seat, and hurries off.

JORKINS

Good-bye, master! Good-bye! God bless you, master! Good-bye!

Exit rapidly.

Excitement outside increased. Litton looks out of window.

LITTON

Oh, I must—I must go with them!

MERIVALE

With a sneer.

You've sent in your papers! How can you go!

LITTON

Turning quickly to him at the door.

In the ranks!

Fanny faints; Merivale catches her and places her in chair. Band outside louder. Commands heard: "No. 1 by the right, march! No. 2 by the right!" Shouts of the crowd and the marching of soldiers.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE I

Office of Seton and Catesby, Solicitors, London. Six months after Act II. In the foreground are Mr. Seton's desk and revolving chair; in the background toward the right Smithers' high desk and stool. On the right a window overlooks a quadrangle; beyond this a door leads to inner offices, and further on is a curtained arch. A large, ancient table stands on the left between the fireplace and the door that opens into outer offices. Law-books on shelves, tin boxes and letter-files appear in utmost order. High-backed office chairs are ranged stiffly against the walls. In a corner an old clock mounts guard. On the mantel-piece tea-things are set out. Mr. Seton is bending over a neat pile of papers at the table, while Smithers, pen over ear, stands at attention by his desk, receiving instructions.

SETON

Now, Smithers, you understand your instructions?

SMITHERS

Perfectly, sir!

Knock at door. Smithers opens the door. Enter Fanny, Polly and Pinckney.

FANNY

Oh, Mr. Seton, I'm so glad to see you again!

SETON

Fanny, my dear girl, you make this legal wilderness blossom like the rose!—Well, Polly, so your hero has come back to you!

PINCKNEY

Yes, indeed! Aren't you glad to see me alive?

SETON

And when is the wedding to take place?

POLLY

Hiding face in hands, with pretended shyness.

Whose wedding?

PINCKNEY

Imitating her.

Yes, whose!

POLLY

Mine?

PINCKNEY

Or mine!

FANNY

Uncle Ambrose and Miss Hyacinth are to set the example next week. Here is your invitation!

SETON

Delightful!—Now, my dear—

FANNY

Guardian, I have something very particular to say to you!

Pinckney leads Polly to table.

POLLY

Rummaging among boxes on shelves.

What a dear old office!

FANNY

To Mr. Seton, with lowered voice.

Mr. Merivale, I believe, is coming here to-day?

SETON

He is. Well?

FANNY

He wants to marry me. He pursues me with it. Will you make him understand it is impossible?

SETON

He shall learn it unmistakably from me to-day, my dear. Now—

POLLY

Opening a tin box.

Biscuits? Let's have a picnic!

SETON

No, Polly! You will find no sweets there; only bitterness and hatred!—Now, my dear young friends—

POLLY

Having opened another box.

Here are the biscuits!

FANNY

Good! Let's have afternoon tea! I know Mr. Seton wants his tea!

Polly and Pinckney bring biscuits and teacups to table; Fanny goes to fireplace and picks up kettle.

SETON

Protesting.

But, my dear—

FANNY

Mr. Smithers, can you get us some boiling water? There ought to be lots of hot water in a lawyer's office.

SMITHERS

He takes the kettle; exit.

Certainly ma'am!

FANNY

Here are tea-cups. But where are the spoons?

SETON

Pointing to Polly and Pinckney.

There's a couple!

Knock at door.

Come in!

Merivale enters. He greets Mr. Seton formally, Fanny with marked devotion, then nods carelessly to the others.

MERIVALE

Well, Polly! So your bad penny has come back to you!

Pinckney threatens Merivale.

POLLY

Hush, Percy! He may be a bad penny, Mr.

Merivale, but I wouldn't change him for a sovereign!

MERIVALE

Addressing Seton.

You sent for me?

SETON

Taking up letter, sits at desk.

Yes! I wish to read you all the latest news of Captain Litton.

FANNY

Going to Seton.

Ah! You've heard from him—at last!

MERIVALE

Ah, poor Litton! Rather the worse for the wars, I hear!

Leans on mantel.

POLLY

Indignantly, to Merivale.

Worse, indeed! When he's got his commission again!

MERIVALE

Shrugging shoulders.

Newspaper accounts are sometimes perverted

and overdrawn! In any case honours are useless to a man when he's a wreck in mind and body!

FANNY

Horrified, clutching Seton.

Oh, guardian! Is that true?

SETON

Don't be alarmed, my dear! As Mr. Merivale says, bank accounts are sometimes perverted and overdrawn—

Merivale moves uneasily.

—Ah, what am I saying! Newspaper accounts! —Two months ago I received this letter from Litton. He writes:

Reading from letter.

"I hear that I am said to have received a bank order for ten thousand pounds on the day of my departure from Beechwood, and to have cashed this at the Southampton Bank shortly before leaving England. That rumour is false. It was debt, not prosperity, that took me away!"

FANNY

Oh-h! If we have been mistaken—!

POLLY

I was sure it would come out right!

PINCKNEY

Of course!

Polly and Pinckney go to window.

FANNY

Oh, the wrong I have done him! If only I could see him to explain! Guardian, write him for me—!

Enter Smithers with kettle.

SMITHERS

Water boils, Miss.

Polly seizes the kettle; it burns her hand. Pinckney takes it from her, burning his hand. Smithers hands a card to Mr. Seton.

Gentleman to see you, sir! I showed him into your private office.

Sits on high stool at desk.

SETON

Reading card.

A client to see me. Be off with you, all of you! You'll find tea and tea-pot in there!

Pointing.

PINCKNEY

Polly, put the kettle on,

Swinging the kettle, as he and Polly go out.

We'll all have tea.

Fanny is about to accompany them, but Mr. Seton detains her.

SETON

A moment, my dear!

Merivale is about to slip quietly out. Mr. Seton, turning in chair, notices him.

Er—a word with you, Mr. Merivale!

Rises, goes to Fanny. Smithers leaps from stool and stands by desk as if to watch Merivale.

Fanny, I hear that while I was away you caused the debt to the Crawford estate to be collected! A most unbusinesslike proceeding!

FANNY

Oh, but, guardian—I had to have the money! It was for a most worthy object!

SETON

But, my dear! Your action embarrassed a most worthy object!

FANNY

Then give them back the money, guardian—I —I don't ever want to hear of it again!

Exit, with emotion.

SETON

To himself.

A woman's idea of business: Ruin Peter to pay Paul—that is, if she loves Paul!

Sits at desk.
Smithers leaps on to stool again.

Now, Mr. Merivale, what have you to tell me about that bank order?

MERIVALE

Nothing, sir—except that that's a damned impertinent question!

SETON

Indeed!—Smithers!

Smithers approaches Merivale.

Where have you seen this gentleman before?

MERIVALE

Looks at Smithers. Recognises him.

I can tell you! In Litton's quarters, the day

of the departure of the regiment—when you gave him a pretty bad character!

SMITHERS

True, sir! But I had already seen you once before!

SETON

Tell him where and under what circumstances!

SMITHERS

Two days previous, in London, at the Bank of Burmah. I had some reason for thinking Captain Litton might call there, and I was waiting for him, behind a door, to collect a bill!

MERIVALE

Laughs, sneering.

As usual!

SMITHERS

He did not come—but you did!

MERIVALE

Nothing more probable! I bank there!

SMITHERS

After a whispered consultation with the clerk, with whom you seemed to be on intimate terms, you cashed an order. It was endorsed with the signature, "Lettarblair Litton."

SETON

You may go now, Smithers!

Smithers goes out.

Well, Merivale, can you deny that you cashed that order?

MERIVALE

Moves a chair forward and sits.

No need to deny it, Mr. Seton. Litton gave it me in payment of a debt at cards!

SETON

Do you expect me to believe that Litton would gamble with you?

MERIVALE

Not now, poor devil! He can't afford it!

SETON

Merivale, we are not satisfied that the endorsement is genuine!

MERIVALE

Turns on Seton.

You accuse me—

SETON

Still seated, turns, facing him.

—of forgery? I do!

MERIVALE

Rises. Moves away a few paces.

Is it likely a man would commit a forgery in broad daylight, and remain on the spot with every chance of detection?

SETON

It sounds too glaringly improbable—yet that

Rises.

is just what you have done! You planned, having parted the lovers, by marrying Fanny to escape detection; or, if detected, to hush up your crime! But, finding that she will not have you, you have secretly prepared to leave the country with your ill-gotten gains!

MERIVALE

Again turns on him.

What are you saying?

SETON

Turning in chair so as always to face Merivale.

Oh, you have been watched, Mr. Merivale! You have been watched!

MERIVALE

Quite unnecessary. Had you asked straightforwardly I would have told you of the trip I intend to take!

SETON

Intended, rather! Your vessel sails to-night, but without you! Is it honest business takes you to the States?

MERIVALE

Leaning on a chair-back.

Men have been known to visit the States for pleasure!

SETON

Rarely under an assumed name, if they be honest!

MERIVALE

This sounds very fine, but you offer me no proof!

SETON

Not because it is lacking. I am only waiting to read it to you, link by link, in the presence of the man you have wronged—Lettarblair Litton.

MERIVALE

You will have to wait. Litton is lying at the point of death in the hospital at Rangoon.

Picks up his hat and goes toward door.

SETON

Takes up letter.

He was, two months since—when this letter was written!—But he's better; he's well; he's here; in England; London; here in my private office, ready to confront—

Merivale hurriedly opens the door.

Ah, Mr. Merivale, you are not anxious to see the Captain!

MERIVALE

You must admit, Mr. Seton, that two to one are heavy odds—

SETON

Go now! To-morrow you will meet me in the library of the Deanery at half-past six—

MERIVALE

Insolently.

I rarely rise so early.

SETON

—in the evening. In the presence of Litton and the Dean you will hand me the ten thousand pounds. And, remember, forgery is felony; its punishment penal servitude. Escape is impossible, for you are watched! You take a conveyance? Another follows you like fate—and wherever you go fate is waiting for you, too!

Merivale makes a gesture as if to strike Seton. Polly, Pinckney and Fanny enter gaily, with tea-pot, sugar-bowl, etc. Fanny prepares to pour the tea.

POLLY

Tea's ready!

MERIVALE

In undertone to Fanny.

Fanny, dearest—hear me once more! They accuse me falsely, of terrible things! Fanny, you know I have always been your friend.

FANNY

Cordially.

Yes! Oh, yes!

MERIVALE

Then marry me at once!

Smithers enters.

It would only be generous, right! I would give my life for you! Come!

Takes her hand as if to lead her away.

FANNY

Drawing back.

No, no! I can not!

SMITHERS

Pointing over shoulder with thumb.

Gentleman in there says he's in a terrible hurry, Mr. Seton, sir. Says he's due at a levee at St. James's palace in fifteen minutes.

MERIVALE

Going hurriedly.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen!

SETON

Mr. Merivale, remember your appointment for to-morrow!

POLLY

Oh, Mr. Merivale, won't you have a cup of tea?

MERIVALE

In a burst of passion.

Tea! I hate tea!

Exit, banging door.

POLLY AND PINCKNEY

Amazed.

He hates tea!

FANNY

Offering cup to Mr. Seton.

Drink it! The longer you wait the colder it gets!

SETON

My dear—my client in there—he has a violent temper, and the longer he waits the hotter it gets!

POLLY

Is he young and handsome? Let's ask him to join us.

SETON

Certainly not!—Get along with you,

Drives Polly and Pinckney.

Polly, with your Pinckneys and your picnics!

POLLY AND PINCKNEY

Oh, what a naughty temper!

Taxing Seton as they go, carrying their tea.

SETON

And you, too, Fanny—

FANNY

Stopping to help herself to sugar, as Polly and Pinckney go out.

Just one more lump!

Goes.

SETON

Now, Smithers—

SMITHERS

Has just put a lump of sugar into his mouth.

Yes sir!

He drops it adroitly into hand and pockets it.
He runs to door at left and opens it.

Step this way, please, Captain!

Ushers in Litton, in full uniform.

LITTON

And how are you this long day, Mr. Seton!

SETON

Cordially shaking hands with Litton.

My dear boy! Welcome home! I trust you are back on a long leave!

Sits at desk again.

LITTON

I return to India to-morrow! What is it you wish to say to me?

SETON

To-morrow? But—your wound?

LITTON

A mere scratch!

SETON

Taking up newspaper to refer to it.

A mere scratch indeed, when it took the Victoria Cross to heal it!

LITTON

Would that all wounds were no deeper, and no cross harder to bear!

Hands busby to Smithers, who places it on table behind pile of tin boxes. Exit Smithers.

SETON

Referring to paper.

Here's all England ringing with praises of the man who—

LITTON

Snatches paper from Seton.

I didn't come from India to hear you read the newspaper! Why did you send for me?

SETON

To confer with you on a matter connected with the Crawford estate!

LITTON

About to sit, leaps up.

There is nothing more to be said on that subject! The debt is discharged, and the matter closed!

SETON

Legally, yes; but something remains to be said in equity!

LITTON

I do not want equity since I never have had justice—Where's my bear-skin?

Looks about for busby.

SETON

Yet if you would consent to meet your ex-creditor I am sure the outcome would be most agreeable!

LITTON

Striding forward.

An income would be more agreeable to me! I refuse to meet my ex-creditor!

SETON

Come, don't say that! I have arranged to bring

you together!—In fact, my client is waiting now to see you!

Places Litton in chair.

Smithers!

Smithers enters.

Smithers, show in the Heir of Crawford!—Pardon, Captain, but trust an old man's judgment, it is for the best!

SMITHERS

Ushering in Fanny.

The Heir of Crawford!

Fanny starts amazed at seeing Litton. Seton signs her to keep quiet. Litton has turned his back squarely, so that he does not see her.

SETON

Come, Captain—we have gone too far to turn back!

LITTON

Doggedly, with folded arms.

I haven't gone too far to turn back!

Fanny had advanced as if to go to him, but at this she starts back, repelled. Smithers exit.

SETON

My client greets you in a friendly spirit—

LITTON

I don't hear him! Is he a deaf mute?

SETON

Not at all! But—while you maintain this hostile attitude, all communication must be carried on through me!—Come, Captain—

Approaching Litton.

it is not like you to turn your back upon the enemy!

LITTON

Sneering.

Enemy!—Gentlemen only quarrel with gentlemen!

SETON

And my client is—

LITTON

No gentleman—or he wouldn't force himself on me!

SETON

Well—Hm!—even were I to concede the point my client has another claim on your consideration!

Leading Fanny back of desk.

Captain! Turn! Forgive! Let mercy and truth meet together, then will peace and righteousness kiss each other on the spot!

LITTON

Savagely.

Kiss him! I'd like to skin the fellow!

Fanny, startled, jumps back.

I put it to ye, Mr. Seton: how can I forgive what I have not forgotten—never can forget?

SETON

What, Captain?

LITTON

In a low voice.

'Twas my father's supposed debt to the Crawford estate that bowed his head and broke the heart in him with a shame which belonged as little to him as to God's angels!

SETON

Yes?

LITTON

Continuing, while Fanny, whose face shows surprise and remorse, cries quietly.

On his dying bed I promised him to take up

the burden—as I would have vowed my very soul to clear his name! Now, this man—knowing this—what does he?

SETON

He dies, acknowledging his error!

LITTON

Aye! But his successor, knowing that, what does he? Makes restitution, you would say? Devil a bit! Calls for everything! Takes a technical advantage which would put Shylock to the blush!—Does the Heir of Crawford enjoy all this?

Bitterly.
Fanny turns away, crying.

SETON

The Heir of Crawford listens! But—my client considered that the end to which the sum was to be applied might justify the means.

LITTON

He put an end to my means! Can he justify that?

Fanny shakes her head "No."

SETON

The sum was needed to aid a charity! A noble charity! Come, Captain, does not that move you?

LITTON

A charity! Of all queer traits in the Heir of Crawford, the greatest of these is charity!—Ha, ha!

Loud, explosive, scornful laugh, that makes Fanny start.

SETON

Oh, but consider! Perhaps a home for orphans!

Lays a hand on Litton's shoulder.

LITTON

Doggedly.

I'm an orphan!

SETON

Suppressing amusement.

Or a refuge for homeless dogs—

LITTON

I'm a homeless dog!

SETON

Or an—an asylum for indigent bachelors—

LITTON

I'm an indigent bachelor!

SETON

Taking Fanny's hand.

Or—to bestow a marriage portion on a deserving young person—

LITTON

I'm a deserving young person—and as for a marriage portion—! See here, Mr. Seton, six months ago I was suitor for the hand of a girl—far away the sweetest girl in all England!

SETON

Musingly.

Strange fact, but this touch of human nature runs like a thread of gold through the grayest woof! Strange—but we old lawyers are sure to find, everywhere, tied up in bundles of yellow old documents, at the top of a mortgage, or the bottom of a will, hidden among dead and buried is-

sues, always last, but never least, like a bar of sunshine in a dark room—the sweetest girl in all England!

Puts his arm about Fanny.

LITTON

In a positive tone.

Not at all, sir! There never was a case like mine! From Mother Eve down there never was a girl so sweet as this one!—How was I to ask a girl who ought to have the best the world can yield to share the fortunes of a beggar!

SETON

My client says: Marry her all the same, if—

LITTON

Your client! Bad 'cess to him, what has your client got to say about me and my—

SETON

My client says: Marry her all the same—if she loves you!

Fanny nods emphatic assent.

LITTON

Aye—if she loves me! How could I tell!—

Fanny hides face on Seton's shoulder.

How could I press my suit when my suit was in chancery!—I suppose she lost faith in me—and then—there was some one else!

Fanny starts, signals No! No! No!

SETON

Moves toward Litton.

Some one else! Are you sure?

LITTON

Shrugs shoulders.

I wasn't left in much doubt! Love is far-sighted, when he isn't blind!

SETON

Quizzically.

He hasn't always eyes in the back of his head, though!

LITTON

He looks before him, sir, even when his head is turned completely! But—

Groans.

—how could I speak to her! There was a bit of a misunderstanding—and exit Lettarblair Litton with the devil to pay!—Now is there anything more to be said? Now is the Heir of Crawford satisfied?

SETON

No! Nor shall I be till I have joined your hands!

Goes to Fanny and takes her hand.

Captain, my client is almost at your elbow!

LITTON

Shouts savagely.

Get thee behind me, Satan!

Fanny starts back.

SETON

I make one final appeal! I have set my heart on joining your hands! There is every reason why you two should know and love one another!

LITTON

The Heir of Crawford may love me all he damn pleases—

Fanny starts, shocked.

—to me he has been merely a legal obstacle! I swear I will never know him as a man!

Fanny laughs.

And now, unless he desires to contemplate the back of a deeply-injured human being he had better withdraw. I wish to go to St. James's, and he is in my way!

Fanny moves toward the door, as if to go, but Seton detains her, considering. Then, with a new idea, motioning her to remain silent, he leads her up and conceals her behind the curtains. This done, he opens and closes the door ostentatiously.

SETON

Impressively.

The Heir of Crawford withdraws!

LITTON

Rises, turns about with a long-drawn breath of relief.

Phew! One can breathe freely, at last! The fellow polluted the very atmosphere!

SETON

Try some tobacco, Captain!

Takes cigar-case from pocket and offers cigar to Litton, who accepts it.

" The Heir of Crawford may love me all he damn pleases —"

Page 181

There is one thing more to be settled about the Crawford estate!

LITTON

Is there no end to the Crawford estate? Hang the Crawford—

SETON

Sitting and cutting off end of cigar.

Hang it by all means! It will soon be your own to do with as you please!—Captain Litton, according to the will of the late John Robinson, the Crawford estate is to be made over to you on the marriage of the present heir, Frances Hadden!

LITTON

Frances Hadden—Fanny—John Robinson—the Crawford—What does this mean!

Pauses in the act of lighting cigar and replaces the spirit-lamp on the table.

SETON

Exactly what I have said!

Turns about in chair, away from Litton.

John Robinson was your father's unscrupulous friend—

LITTON

But—his son—the fellow who was here just now—?

Coming forward eagerly.

SETON

Died—years before his father!

LITTON

Horrified.

Have I been abusing a ghost! The Lord forgive me!

SETON

Not at all! John Robinson, Senior, left his property to the child of his only daughter—Frances Hadden!

LITTON

Tenderly.

Fanny!

SETON

But on his death-bed he executed a deed of transfer—wishing to repair the injury done to your father—

LITTON

Poor old Dad!

SETON

—giving the estate to you, at such time as Fanny shall marry—

LITTON

Beginning to grasp it.

Then Fanny is—?

SETON

The *present* Heir of Crawford.

LITTON

Tenderly.

Fanny, now! To think of that!

Fiercely.

Then why haven't I known it?

SETON

Hm, well—it was not necessary! Besides, you swore you wouldn't meet your creditor!

LITTON

You—don't—mean—to say—?

Looks about room.

No, no! Impossible!

SETON

What is?

LITTON

That Fanny has been here! I should know if she were within a mile of the place!

Seton covers a laugh with his handkerchief.

Then 'tis with the dead I have been fighting the battles of the dead—and Fanny is the rose of peace that has blossomed on the battlefield!

A pause, slight, but solemn.

Why did she want this money?

Sharply.

SETON

Fanny wished to secure part of her fortune, without his knowledge, to the man she loves!

LITTON

Poor—poor little Fanny!

SETON

Nay! I think it for the best!

LITTON

Of course, she knows nothing of this?

SETON

I communicated it to you first, in view of your speedy return to India!

Turning about in chair, takes from drawer of desk two documents.

Here is a copy of the will; and here—

Hands one of these to Litton.

—the deed of transfer.

Opens will; runs eye over contents. Fanny, deeply moved, appears between the curtains, watching.

LITTON

She need never know!

Lifts deed high in hand.

I hold in my hand that which comes like a message from the dead; a tardy requital of the injury of a lifetime, and a complete vindication of the honour of my father's name.

Seton solemnly says Amen. Fanny, inaudibly, echoes Amen. Litton, with a quick movement, thrusts the deed into the flame of the lamp.

SETON

Turning slowly and absent-mindedly in chair, catches sight of him, and, half-rising, tries to check him.

Stop! What are you doing? Do you realise that you are destroying your title to one of the finest properties in the United Kingdom?

LITTON

Not at all! Simply making it a wedding present to Fanny! An illumination in honour of Fanny's wedding!—A burnt offering, as it were!

Drops the burning paper, and stamps on it, extinguishing it.

So perish old animosities!

Goes hurriedly toward the door, finding his busby as he passes the table.

Good-bye!

SETON

Agitated, turns toward him, swinging about in chair.

Aren't you going to say good-bye to Fanny?—Have you forgotten Fanny?

LITTON

Standing near the door. With deep feeling.

Forget her?—Never!—I can't see her again, though! God bless her!—Good-bye!

Goes hurriedly, closing the door sharply behind him. Seton swings about in chair, away from door, as he wipes his glasses. Fanny advances, and, kneeling, picks up the charred deed, then suddenly bows her head on Seton's knee in a passion of tears. He smooths her hair tenderly.

CHANGE OF SCENE

SCENE II

On the following day in the garden at Beechwood. To the centre of the picture a stately tree spreads its shade over a rustic bench and a table, on which are apples, and daisies in a vase. On the right stands an old, moss-stained, vine-wreathed sun-dial. Paths lead in all directions among trim flower beds, clumps of shrubs and trees. In the distance is a golden vista. Everything betokens peace and old-fashioned exquisiteness seen through the soft hazes of a mellow afternoon. Hyacinth is sitting, listening adoringly to the Dean, who is seen approaching playing on his zither, *Believe me, if all those endearing young charms.*

Dean sits by Hyacinth.

HYACINTH

With a sigh of rapture as the Dean ends.

I could listen to you for ever!

DEAN

Touched.

My dear Hyacinth!

HYACINTH

Taking her gloves and parasol from the table.

Does Fanny know that Lettarblair is coming?

DEAN

Oh, no! It is to be a surprise!

HYACINTH

I think you mentioned the six o'clock train.

DEAN

Rising and giving Hyacinth his hand.

True, my dear! We had better be starting. My horses are such conservatives they are apt to be behind time!

Exeunt Dean and Hyacinth. Enter Litton. He looks about cautiously. Pinckney and Jorkins follow him.

LITTON

Stay by the mare, Jorkins, and—you know what to do!

JORKINS

Salutes, and exit.

Aye, aye, sir!

"Believe me, if all those endearing young charms" *Page 189*

LITTON

And you, Pinckney—whistle if those fellows grow unmanageable—and for the rest, keep your eyes shut, no matter what you see!—Then when the last echo of Kitty Tyrrell's hoofs has died away, give the detectives this little token, and this note.

Hands money and letter to Pinckney.

PINCKNEY

Hm! I'd like to cane the fellow before I help him escape! Surely he deserves some punishment!

LITTON

Sh!—You're a bit of a sinner yourself! And perhaps he has a conscience somewhere!—Go, now, quick!

PINCKNEY

It goes against the grain, but—

Exit. Enter Merivale.

MERIVALE

Well, Litton! I have always disliked you cordially! Well, you have your revenge!

LITTON

Sadly.

God knows I don't want it, Merivale! 'Tis not the sweet thing 'tis cracked up to be!

MERIVALE

You cut me out with the woman I wished to marry—and I—I forged your name!

LITTON

But for the grace of God I might have forged my own name, Merivale!—And—and you can make restitution, you know!

MERIVALE

Sits on table.

Of course I must make restitution, or suffer a most undesirable punishment—or both!

LITTON

Have you the money with you?

MERIVALE

All I could lay hands on! Unfortunately I had

spent three hundred pounds, not calculating on its being required of me—at any rate, so soon!

Laughs bitterly, slapping breast.

Nine thousand, seven hundred pounds! Seton intimated that I must hand it to him to-night in the presence of the Dean and yourself!

LITTON

Hand it over now, man!

MERIVALE

Rising, crosses to R.

Write me an acknowledgement!

Takes envelope from breast, counts out the money it contains and lays it on table.

Nine—five—two ones. Nine thousand, seven hundred.

Litton hands him a card on which he has been writing.

What's this? You say "receipt for amount in full—?"

LITTON

Putting envelope with money in breast.

It shall be the full amount when Seton gets it.

MERIVALE

Hm! You're a generous enemy, Litton! I may find time to like you better when I am breaking stones at Botany Bay!

Bitterly.

LITTON

Merivale, 'tis to save you from that I brought you here. Quick, man, quick! Jorkins is waiting for you over yonder! You are to ride Kitty Tyrrell to the station. 'Tis all arranged; your passage taken. In a new world you can start on a new life!

MERIVALE

Suppose I decline to accept your kindness!

Pinckney is heard to whistle a warning.

JORKINS

Putting head round corner.

Captain, time's up!

LITTON

Sure, in another minute you won't have a fighting chance to accept it or decline!—I needn't remind you of the alternative!

MERIVALE

I accept!—You and Fanny will doubtless enjoy many a good laugh together over my—blunder!

LITTON

For her own sake, from me she shall never hear of it. And if anything can redeem you in my eyes, 'tis the thought that in your own way you may have cared for her!—Now go! And—and—

Slapping Merivale on back.

I don't want to preach to ye, Merivale, but remember that honesty is the best policy—and even if it isn't, stick to it all the same, Merivale!

MERIVALE

Breaking down.

Oh, God forgive me!

LITTON

Solemnly.

Amen! And bless you, too, Merivale!

MERIVALE

Good afternoon, Litton.

Recovering himself, speaks with assumption of jauntiness.

Don't forget to hand that envelope to Seton, and mention to him that I am unable to keep my appointment with him!

Exit.

LITTON

Looks after him and sighs.

Poor dear old Merivale!

Sits on the table, and, taking a letter from pocket, reads it to himself, kisses it, then reads it aloud several times with different intonations, holding it out at arm's length. Rises, repeating the words. Whispers them. Sits on bench and spreads out the letter on his knee, reading it.

"Come back to me! Fanny!"—Look at that, now!—"Come, back, to, me, Fanny!" Ha, ha, ha, ha! Just look at it smiling up at me! Hear it calling with her very voice! "Come! Back! To! Me! Fanny!—Come-back-to-me-Fanny!"—Ha, Ha, Ha! "ComebacktomeFanny—Come—back—to—me—"

Rises, kisses letter, and exit left, still reading it. Fanny enters. Polly follows her.

FANNY

Looking at sun-dial.

Oh, dear! Do you believe this tells the time

right, Polly? The shadow takes so long to creep around, to-day!

POLLY

Yes, dear! I shouldn't wonder if the earth moved more slowly altogether till the Irish cousin comes!

Picking out an apple and taking a large bite.

FANNY

Sighing.

It feels that way!

POLLY

But I think, all the same, the trains may run on time for the sake of the other passengers!

Munches apple.

FANNY

Two mortal hours before he gets here! And then—ah, me! How he must despise me!

POLLY

How funny for him to come all the way down here just to despise you.

Munches apple.

FANNY

I wrote and asked him to. I mean, to come! I couldn't let him go away forever without telling him that I know how noble he is!—And then there are some affairs to settle—and then—ah, me!

POLLY

And then they lived happily for ever afterward! Ah, me!

Mimicking Fanny.

FANNY

Nonsense, Polly! Do you think I have no self-respect! Do you think I—Oh, no! He will go away, and I shall be like a widow or a nun! Just as if he could ever care for me now!

POLLY

Takes up a daisy and gives it to Fanny, then selects one for herself and plucks out its petals.

We'll see!—There! That's for you! And this one's for me!—Loves me; loves me not; loves me; not; loves; not; loves me! True for you!—We'll try again! Why don't you begin, Fanny?

FANNY

I'm afraid!

POLLY

Plucking another daisy.

'Sme; 'sme not; 'sme; 'sme not; loves me!—Of course! Make haste with yours, Fanny!

FANNY

The risk is too great that way, because if it isn't Loves me, it has to be Loves me not!—I'll try a longer road!—"He loveth me; right heartily; all silently; distrustfully; a fortnight hence; with confidence; he loves me all in all; with secret smart; with all his heart; till death do part; a little; not—" Oh, dear!

POLLY

Well?

FANNY

It comes out, "Not at all!" Lying daisy! I can not, will not believe it!

Flings away the plucked daisy.

POLLY

Still plucking.

Loves—Not—Loves—Not—Loves! L o o k, Fanny!

Holding up a bunch of stripped daisy heads.

See what a bunch of "He Loves Me's!"

FANNY

Oh, Polly, you are the luckiest girl! How do you manage it that it comes out "Loves Me" every time?

POLLY

It's very simple! I count the petals first; and if they're an even number I begin on "Loves me not," while if they're odd I start with "Loves me!" And then it has to come out right! Life is so much happier if you look at things in that way, Fanny!

FANNY

Perhaps it is!

Goes to sun-dial and looks at it.

How slow you are! Aren't you ever tired of waiting for your own shadow?

" Oh, when he comes I shall say—I shall say—" *Page 201*

POLLY

And when he comes what will you say to him?

Litton approaches, still reading letter. He starts on seeing the two girls, but at a sign from Polly pauses to listen to Fanny.

FANNY

In rapturous tones, not seeing Litton.

Oh, when he comes I shall say—I shall say—

Clasping hands rapturously, turns and sees him. Very coldly.

Good afternoon, Captain Litton!

LITTON

Good afternoon!

POLLY

As usual Polly is *de trop*—Loves me—Loves me not!

Exit, mocking Fanny.

FANNY

Nice day, isn't it!

LITTON

Ah, Fanny, I'm not here to talk about any-

thing so inconstantly constant as the weather! I've come to—

FANNY

Putting the sun-dial between them.

No, please. Not a word till I have had my say! I wrote, asking you to come, before you go away forever, because I want you to know that I know —I want to explain—

LITTON

My heart! Don't explain anything! Your letter was sufficient! "Come-back-to-me-Fanny!" —and my going away depends entirely on you! I don't need to tell you that, Fanny!

FANNY

It's just this: I want you to know that I know everything—just how considerate, and good and noble you have been—

LITTON

Impatiently.

Oh, none of that!

Goes to her behind the sun-dial.

" Come-back-to-me-Fanny ! " *Page 202*

FANNY

Retreating toward table.

No, please! I want to finish. I want to say that I can not accept so great a sacrifice. You must take back your own.

She leans on the table.

LITTON

Sits on bench.

It is not mine, Fanny!

FANNY

Emphasising with her fan.

Oh, but it is! It is!

LITTON

Absolutely not. There is not a paper in existence on which I could base a claim. That you can not change. You're the Prince and I'm the pauper still!

FANNY

Oh, what shall we do! I want you so to have it. I have wanted it all along!

LITTON

You know there is something I care for more

than anything else in the world. That you can give me!

FANNY

With passion, flinging away her fan.

No, you shan't ask me that!

LITTON

Picks up the fan.

Ah, now, Fanny!

FANNY

Don't you see if you were to ask me to marry you now I should always feel that you had done it out of pity! You see, it was for you, and you only, and always you, all along, even when I seemed to mistrust you! And you were so noble! I ought to be on my knees to you!

LITTON

Fanning himself.

So you ought! So you ought!

FANNY

I did such terrible things to you. I told Mr. Seton to squeeze you for the money! I thought

you were a corporation or a railroad! But all the same it was for you!

Sobbing.

LITTON

My darling! Thank Heaven I'm neither a corporation nor a railroad, the squeezing will come so much easier on that account!—I'd sooner have you do it than old Seton!

Rises and goes to her, but she motions him back.

Well, what shall we do!

Fanny shakes head despairingly while wiping her eyes. With a new idea.

I'll tell you, Fanny! If it's any balm to your blessed little heart you shall ask me to marry you! Royalty does that, you know, when it desires to ally itself with the lowly; so that it won't be anything out of the way!

FANNY

Relieved.

Oh, I will!

Heroically.

But—

Moves a few steps away to the left.

You must refuse me if you want to!

LITTON

Airily.

That's of course!

FANNY

Taken aback.

Oh!

LITTON

Well?

Fanny makes a futile effort to speak. He mimics her.

FANNY

I don't know how to begin!

LITTON

Haven't ye had my graceful example to profit by?

FANNY

Well, then—

Marches stiffly toward him.

Captain Litton, will you marry me?

LITTON

Shudders.

Dear me! You'd have sent for a policeman and ordered me from the house if I had taken that tone! Much more deferential, Fanny!

FANNY

It's harder than I thought—Captain Litton, *please* will you marry me?

LITTON

Och, but you mustn't spring it on a coy creature that way! You must lead up to it, now, Fanny!

FANNY

Oh, dear!—But how?

LITTON

You must seek to gain my ear with protestations of undying affection, and incidentally, throw in a few tributes to my charms! Allude frequently to my eyes!

FANNY

Well, then—

Breaks off, scuffing her foot among the fallen leaves, while Litton imitates her.

—I think you are quite nice-looking—at times!

LITTON

Fanning himself, as if propitiated.

Ah-h!

FANNY

And—I'm very fond of you—and—

Breaks off, puzzled how to go on.

LITTON

In a patronising tone.

Persevere! Use more impassioned eloquence!

FANNY

I admire you! I love you!

LITTON

Much too cold and commonplace!

FANNY

I think you are perfectly beautiful! I adore you! I worship the very ground you walk on!

Approaches him.

LITTON

Condescendingly.

Hackneyed, but much better!

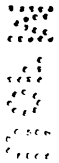
FANNY

Listen to me, I entreat you. See—

Kneels in front of him.

I am on my knees to you!

" Hackneyed, but much better ! " *Page 208*



LITTON

Why, what makes you do that! It must be very uncomfortable!

Fanning himself.

FANNY

Rises indignantly.

It isn't fair, at all! I won't have anything more to do with you!

LITTON

Ah, now you're beginning to make an impression! And if you were to go just a few steps away—

Detains her by his tone as she is about to leave him.

not very far, you know—I should instantly seek to lure ye back again!

Fans himself.

FANNY

I never behaved so to you!

LITTON

With feeling.

No, indeed! When one day you let me think you loved me well enough to marry me, and a week afterward—

FANNY

With deep feeling.

Oh, Lettarblair, it was all a mistake!

LITTON

Then—if I were to tell you that I could not live without you—?

FANNY

And if I were to ask you not to try to—?

LITTON

Fanny—dear, dearest Fanny!

He takes her into his arms. Enter the Dean, Hyacinth and Mr. Seton. Fanny breaks from Litton and goes to sun-dial.

DEAN

My boy! Bless your honest face, here you are! —It was all a stupid mistake!

SETON

United to a very pretty bit of legal complication!

LITTON

Yes, ha, ha! I was the stupid mistake, and—

He takes Fanny's hand.

I am going to be united to the pretty bit of legal complication!

Enter Pinckney and Polly.

PINCKNEY

Aha! I told you so!

DEAN

In tone of indulgent reproof.

Pinckney, sir! The occasion does not call for frivolity!

He hands Hyacinth to seat and places himself beside her.

POLLY

Taxing Fanny.

Ah, Fanny! He loves me—Loves me not!

FANNY

Taking a daisy and plucking the petals.

He loveth me!—

LITTON

Plucking the petals with her.

Right heartily!

FANNY

All silently;